

An aerial photograph of a lush tropical forest. A large, dense canopy of green trees covers most of the upper and right portions of the image. In the lower-left, a river with murky, brownish water flows. A sandy clearing or beach area is visible in the lower-right, where a few small figures of people can be seen. The overall scene is vibrant and natural.

# Q3 2020

## Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project **Impact Report**

**EVER  
LAND**



**WILDLIFEALLIANCE**

*Direct Protection to Forests & Wildlife*



## Q3 2020 Summary

# Protecting biodiversity of the Cardamoms

This past quarter, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Rangers have worked diligently to protect the biodiversity of both tree and animal species, with successful arrests of poachers and loggers. Additionally, Southern Cardamom REDD+ camera trappings have captured new images of dholes, an Endangered wild dog species that is crucially dependent on the continuous forest cover provided by the Cardamom Rainforest Landscape.

✓ Wildlife rescued by REDD+ Rangers

✓ A globally important landscape for species survival, including endangered wild dogs

✓ Luxury timber raid





## Wildlife rescued by REDD+ Rangers

A total of 79 live wildlife were rescued in this past quarter.<sup>1</sup> Two notable cases include:

August 23, 2020. The Chhay Areng rangers conducted a night ambush patrol on Thmor Bang road, Russey Chrum commune, Thmor Bang district inside Southern Cardamom National Park.

The team tried to stop two suspicious motorbikes to check for poached wildlife, but the drivers suddenly dropped the bikes and ran away. The team immediately arrived at the bikes to check for injured wildlife and found one dead Palm Civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*), one dead unidentified Eagle and one injured Mouse deer (*Tragulus kanchil*).

The Mouse deer received first aid operation before sending it, the same night, to the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Takeo province for further care.

August 25, 2020. The Koh Pao rangers encountered a similar situation where a suspicious bike was stopped, and a poacher was caught. He was transporting two live leaf turtles (*Cyclemys atripons*), one live Asian softshell turtle (*Amyda cartilaginea*) and a Chinese Water Dragon (*Physignathus cocincinus*). Both the softshell turtle and the water dragon are Vulnerable on the IUCN Redlist, and the leaf turtle is considered to be likely threatened but not enough is currently known about their global populations for the IUCN to make an accurate assessment.<sup>2</sup>

This time, the rangers were able to arrest the poacher and released all four animals back into the wild.

Both of these instances highlight the need for in-situ conservation actions rather than a targeted, species-specific approach, especially in the instance of the leaf turtles. Studies have shown that species are likely going extinct before or soon after they have been properly studied at a higher rate than we previously thought<sup>3</sup>, and without landscape-wide protection as in the Cardamoms, we will lose many more. All poaching must be taken seriously, regardless of current IUCN classification of the target species.

<sup>1</sup> Station reports

<sup>2</sup> Rhodin, A. G., van Dijk, P. P., Iverson, J. B., & Shaffer, H. B. (2010). *Turtles of the world, 2010 update: annotated checklist of taxonomy, synonymy, distribution, and conservation status*. *Chelonian Research Monographs*, 5(3), 000-85.

<sup>3</sup> Lees, A. C., & Pimm, S. L. (2015). *Species, extinct before we know them?*. *Current Biology*, 25(5), R177-R180.



## Highlights





## A globally important landscape for species survival, including endangered wild dogs

Recent camera trappings conducted in collaboration with the Cardamom Forest Protection Program rangers in August and September in the south-western area of the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project area recorded a pack of at least ten dholes, Asian wild dogs (*Cuon alpinus*).

This was exciting for the project, as dholes are registered as Endangered on the IUCN redlist and are the most threatened large carnivore remaining in the Cardamom Rainforest Landscape. It is estimated that there are only 950-2,200 mature adult dholes left globally, and they have disappeared from more than 75% of their former range.<sup>1</sup>

The Southern Cardamom REDD+ project area is one of the last strongholds for dholes in South East Asia, and a globally important landscape for the species survival.

In addition to dholes, other key IUCN Threatened wildlife species spotted include clouded leopards (*Neofelis nebulosi*) and hog badgers (*Arctonyx collaris*).

Both dholes<sup>2,3</sup> and clouded leopards<sup>4</sup> require large expanses of dense forest cover to survive and thrive, and this is undoubtedly why they are doing well in the Southern Cardamom landscape.

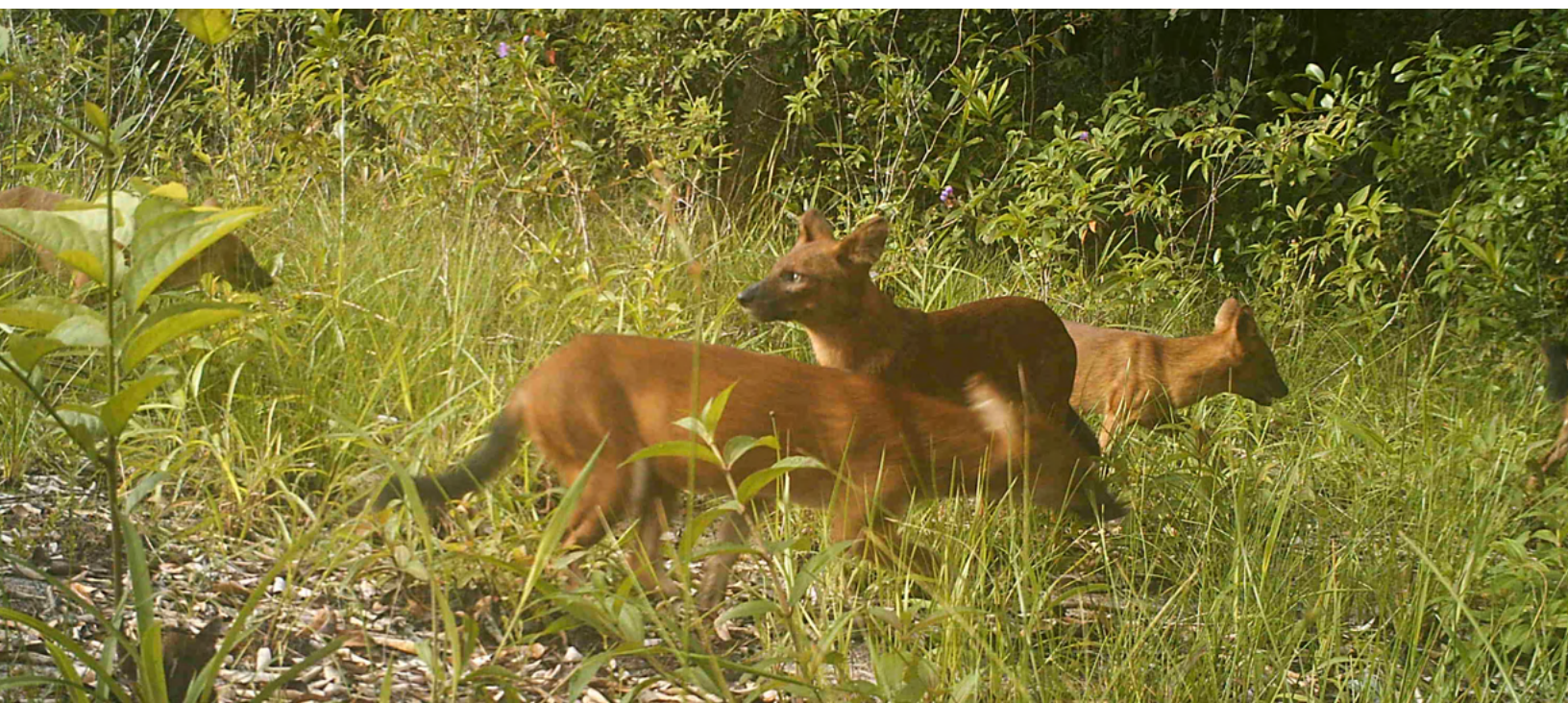
These results show the importance of the CFPP and Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project for protecting globally significant populations of threatened species from extinction, and highlights the need to preserve large, continuous forest cover for the sake of biodiversity.

1 Kamler, J. F., Songsasen, N., Jenks, K., Srivathsa, A., Sheng, L., & Kunkel, K. (2015). *Cuon alpinus*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2015: e. T5953A72477893.

2 Kamler, J. F., Johnson, A., Vongkhamheng, C., & Bousa, A. (2012). *The diet, prey selection, and activity of dholes (Cuon alpinus) in northern Laos*. *Journal of Mammalogy*, 93(3), 627-633.

3 Srivathsa, A., Karanth, K. K., Jathanna, D., Kumar, N. S., & Karanth, K. U. (2014). *On a dhole trail: examining ecological and anthropogenic correlates of dhole habitat occupancy in the Western Ghats of India*. *PloS one*, 9(6), e98803.

4 Macdonald, D. W., Bothwell, H. M., Kaszta, Z., Ash, E., Bolongon, G., Burnham, D., ... & Hearn, A. J. (2019). *Multi-scale habitat modelling identifies spatial conservation priorities for mainland clouded leopards (Neofelis nebulosa)*. *Diversity and Distributions*, 25(10), 1639-1654.





## Luxury timber raid

On August 1, Chambok station rangers seized more than three tonnes of illegal luxury timber from a house within their patrol quadrant. A total of 227 pieces of Siamese Rosewood (*Dalbergia cochinchinensis*), known as 'Krak kranhoong' locally, were seized in the raid. Siamese rosewood is listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red List and is becoming increasingly rare because of demand for the illegal timber industry. As of 2015, an estimated 85% of Cambodia's timber exports ended up in China, feeding the craze for "Hongmu" furniture, a highly-sought-after type of luxury furniture.<sup>1</sup>

The rangers also seized 30 pieces of "Thnong" wood, Burma paduak (*Pterocarpus macrocarpus*) and small amounts of 'Nangnuon', or Burmese rosewood (*Dalbergia bariensis*, Pierre) another type of luxury rosewood timber. Both are considered Endangered by the IUCN.

Also confiscated were a serow skin (*Capricornis sumatraensis*, IUCN Vulnerable) and 1 dead red muntjac (*Muntiacus muntjak*).

Without ranger intervention, even more rare and threatened tree species would be harvested and lost. The high demand for Rosewood is putting these species under great threat, and they will soon be lost if direct protection on the ground is not present.

<sup>1</sup> Global Witness (2015) *"The Cost of Luxury: Cambodia's Illegal Trade in Precious Wood with China"*.







## Land requests and monsoon rain

One of the greatest challenges facing the Cardamoms are spurious land allocation decisions, currently being made all over the country, that could cut land out of the Protected Area. The Wildlife Alliance is working tirelessly to protect the forest from land grabbing under the guise of granting land titles to poor communities.



## Challenges

✓ Ensuring genuine land allocations

✓ Moving through monsoon season





## Ensuring genuine land allocations

On July 3rd, 2020, the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and the Council of Ministers passed Decision 05, which offered land titles to people who had been living on Protected Area land for at least ten years, with a fixed settlement and plantation. This is a positive move, as it grants land rights to people who have been settled and formerly landless, in principle protecting the most vulnerable and impoverished people. However, this land allocation process is ripe for abuse by people attempting to grab land under the guise of having been settled in the area long-term, and many local authorities are processing land requests over forestland without pre-existing settlements.

Wildlife Alliance has been working closely with the Ministry of Environment to visit the sites of these land requests and ensure that no requests are over forest land or recently deforested areas to prevent land grabbing. Working groups for land allocation were formed in all seven districts of Koh Kong province, and Wildlife Alliance representatives joined each group, utilising drones to map and investigate land claims to show local authorities which were over forestland and should not be granted.

The land allocation process is ongoing, and Wildlife Alliance are working closely with all levels of Government to prevent loss of the carbon sink of the Southern Cardamom REDD+ landscape. The project has been integral for ensuring that forestland requests are not granted by local authorities.





## Moving through monsoon season

The Community Agriculture and Livelihoods Project (CALP) team have continued to battle the elements working to develop new livelihoods projects to improve the income of local communities.

Cambodia's monsoon season has fallen later and heavier than in previous years, likely an effect of climate change, and has led to flooding and difficult conditions, especially in the muddy and waterlogged Cardamom Rainforest. The team has been working in Chhay Areng Valley to implement a community-based buffalo-raising livelihood project for a pilot project of 71 families, improving their income and creating a local market for wildlife feed from other farmers.

The team are currently in the process of identifying suitable land on which to raise a buffalo herd, but in late September have struggled through the rain and mud in the valley. Paths and trails in the fields have disintegrated and streams have swollen into torrents with water.

However, the rainy season cannot halt the undertaking, and the team continues to work hard to begin the buffalo project in earnest.





## ✓ --- Forest Impacts



- ✓ **3,482** land encroachment cases brought
- ✓ **5,432** chainsaws seized
- ✓ Annual deforestation rate reduced to **<0.074%** (vs. nat average ~**0.93%**)



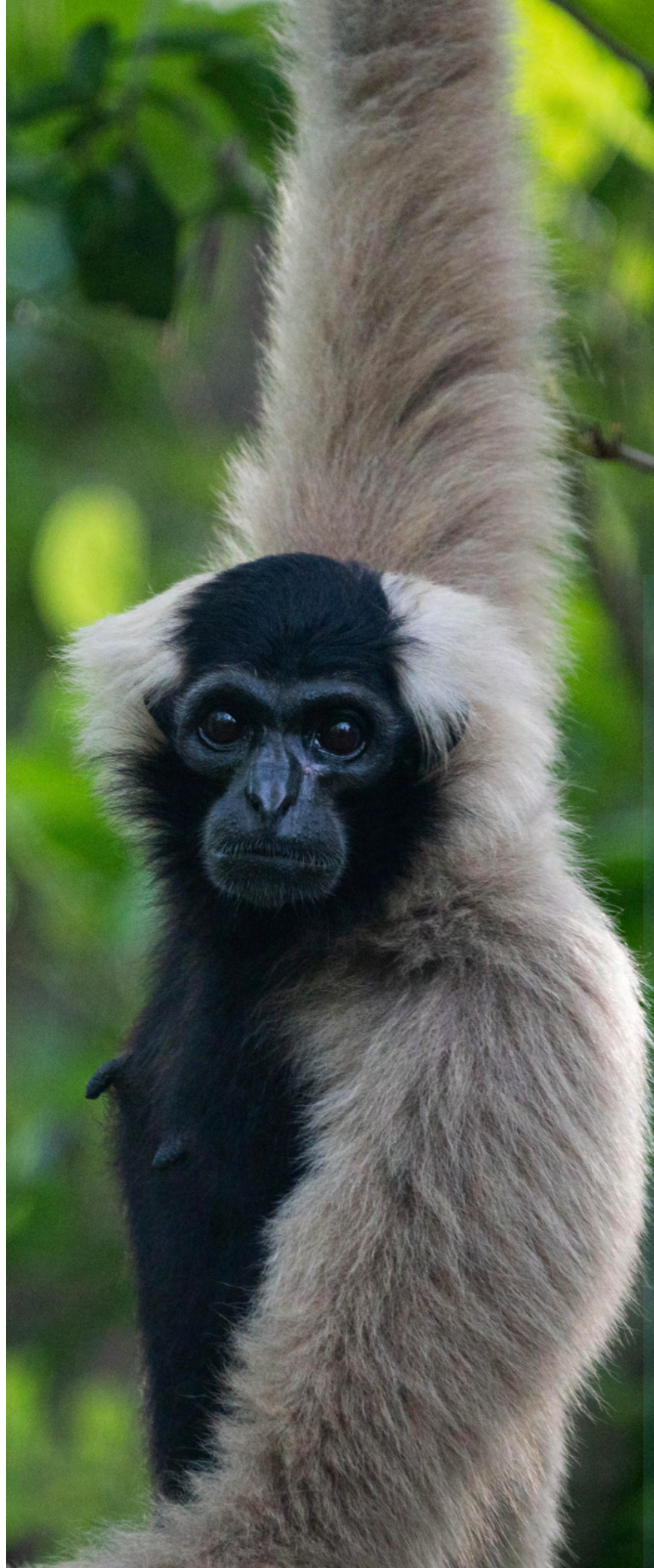


## Impact Over Time

# Wildlife Impacts



- ✓ **301,816** wildlife snares removed
- ✓ **6,190** illegal hunting camps dismantled
- ✓ **6,749** live wildlife rescued
- ✓ **Zero** poaching of Asian elephants (2006-)





## Impact Over Time

# Community Impacts



- ▼ **\$371,105** average annual income to 15 villages as a direct result of Community Based Ecotourism (CBET) - since 2010
- ▼ **604** families in 12 villages fully or partially supported by CBET in Chi Phat and Chhay Areng
- ▼ **44%** of community management positions in CBET / CADP held by women





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