

Q4 2020

Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project **Impact Report**

**EVER
LAND**



WILDLIFEALLIANCE

Direct Protection to Forests & Wildlife

Southern Cardamom: Unwavering protection in the face of pervasive threats.

In 2020, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project continued to face, and face down, an unrelenting series of threats to the forest and its wildlife, while providing communities with crucial support in the midst of the COVID pandemic. Ranging from small scale poaching to large scale corrupt land-grabbing, the project has tirelessly defended the highly threatened Cardamom forest.

Key achievements for 2020 include:

- 1. Relentless defense of the forest.** The Southern Cardamom ranger team was on constant patrol in 2020, conducting 5,189 patrols in total that covered 193,651 kilometers throughout the forest. The ranger team Stopped 140 land encroachment attempts in the field, and confiscated 663 vehicles used for illegal activities, including 33 excavators, bulldozers and tractors used to clear the forest. The rangers also confiscated 1,720 illegal chainsaws and removed 9 illegal sawmills within the forest. These figures illustrate how critical the work of the project is on a daily basis.
- 2. Care for wildlife.** The Southern Cardamom forest area faces intensive pressure from poachers, who set countless snares and traps within the protected area. Over the course of the year, Southern Cardamom rangers found and removed 25,886 wildlife snares and rescued 562 live animals from poachers and hunters. Snare by snare, animal by animal, the project is defending the life within the forest with extreme intensity.
- 3. Fighting land grabbing.** In 2020, a new government program offered land titles to smallholders who had been living on Protected Area land for at least ten years. Wildlife Alliance representatives have helped to stop numerous attempts to abuse this process by people attempting to grab large tracts of land, and preserved at least 30,000 hectares of land from being improperly granted, an enormous achievement.
- 4. Supporting communities.** In 2020, Wildlife Alliance laid the groundwork for an ambitious multi-year sustainable agriculture development program. The project's Community Development Team surveyed 964 families across 14 villages to design agriculture projects that are best suited to communities' preferences, soil quality and micro-climates.

It is clear enough that without the relentless efforts of Wildlife Alliance, the Cardamom forest and its wildlife would have little defense in the face of threats from all sides. The sustainable financing from REDD+ is preserving this critical carbon and biodiversity stock at a pivotal time of need for planet Earth.

About the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project

The Cardamom Rainforest Landscape is one of the last unfragmented rainforests remaining in Southeast Asia and is a critical part of the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot. Through a unique boots-on-the ground enforcement partnership with, Cambodia's Environment Ministry and the Cambodian Military, and using global best practices for forest protection and community development, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project prevents more than 3,000,000 tons of carbon emissions annually and protects 497,000 hectares of tropical rainforest in South-West Cambodia.

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2020 Impacts



Zoning Victory

- Zoning negotiations preserved 106,147 hectares of Core Zone and 22,951 hectares Conservation Zone



REDD+ Rangers

- Conducted 5,189 patrols covering 193,651km
- Stopped 140 land encroachment attempts in the field, and submitted 115 cases to the courts
- Confiscated 663 vehicles used for illegal activities, including 33 excavators, bulldozers and tractors used to clear the forest
- Confiscated 1,720 illegal chainsaws and removed 9 illegal sawmills within the forest
- Removed 25,886 wildlife snares
- Rescued 562 live animals from poachers and hunters



Community Development

- Surveyed 964 families across 14 villages to design agriculture projects that are best suited to communities' preferences, soil quality and micro-climates

Forest protection on the frontlines

As the floods of October vanished and the dry season began, snaring and land grabbing started to increase in the project zone. In response, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ team has had an active quarter on the frontlines protecting the forest — removing snares, fighting land grabbing, and continuing to support the well-being of local communities affected by the flooding.

✓ Critical flood relief to 453 families

✓ Protecting wildlife and ecosystem preservation





Critical flood relief to 453 families

Thanks to the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project, Wildlife Alliance was able to provide essential flood relief assistance to badly affected communities north of the Project area, in the leakage zone.

The Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project has recognized that the wellbeing of community members in and around the project area they protect is important, not only in a humanitarian sense, but as a keystone for the sustainability of the forest ecosystem.

In October 2020, heavy rains caused massive flooding throughout Cambodia, particularly in the north-west. The villages of Pursat in Pramouy, Rokay and Bak Chenhchean communes, in the leakage zone to the north of the REDD+ Project, were badly affected. To alleviate the suffering these communities were facing, a Wildlife Alliance relief mission, supported by the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project, travelled to the communities from Phnom Penh with crucial supplies to give to the villagers. From October 14-16, Wildlife Alliance provided rice, dried fish, instant noodles and tents to the affected communities, giving aid to 453 families.

Wildlife Alliance “Report on aiding to 453 families flood victims in 3 communes Veal Veng and Phnom Kravanh Districts, Pursat Province October 14 & 16, 2020”.



Highlights



Protecting wildlife and ecosystem preservation

The Southern Cardamom REDD+ project takes a holistic approach to protecting species, focusing both on the integrity of the forest itself and on intensive frontline wildlife defense.

During this past quarter, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ rangers, while patrolling a poaching hotspot, found and rescued a group of live wild pigs (*Sus scrofa*) caught in a wall of deadly snares.

Protection of wildlife, even those considered more common like a wild pig, is important for the preservation of an ecosystem as a whole. Wild pigs are an important prey species for carnivores in the landscape, such as dholes and clouded leopards. Snares, of course, also do not discriminate, and will kill all wildlife that comes across them, decimating biodiversity in the process.

On November 2, 2020, rangers from Trepeang Rung Patrol Station were on patrol when they found a snaring hotspot. They found one dead muntjac (*Muntiacus muntjac*), one live turtle and five live wild pigs caught in the snares, which they set to work carefully freeing in a way that would avoid injury to both the animals and to the rangers. All five pigs were successfully released back into the forest, and the area was cleared of 350 snares.

At the same time, another patrol unit from Trepeang Rung found some wild pigs that weren't so lucky. They found a group of poachers who fled into the forest, leaving behind their motorbikes and the remains of three large wild pigs (250 kg of meat), highlighting the grisly fate that awaits animals caught in these deadly snares.

Cardamom Forest Protection Program – Trepeang Rung Ranger Patrol Station Daily Report, 2 November 2020 and Distributions, 25(10), 1639-1654.





Defending the forest and fighting land grabbing

This past quarter, The Southern Cardamom REDD+ project has continued to protect the forest and its biodiversity in the face of pervasive threats.



Challenges

✓ Bird netting on the rise

✓ Removing the threat of land grabbing



Bird netting on the rise

The Southern Cardamoms and the mangroves of the Koh Kong coast are an important stop for many migratory birds on the East Asia/Australasia Flyway, with migration through Cambodia peaking in December. However, this year the project has seen a drastic increase in the use of net snares — long stretches of mist-netting stretched along the coast that can capture entire flocks of birds as they arrive, tired from their journey.

Across the whole flyway, an estimated 50 million birds from 492 species migrate from Siberia and East Asia to Australasia ¹, with large numbers passing through Cambodia. Mangroves, wetlands and key habitat areas like those on the coastal edges of the Southern Cardamom REDD+ project area are key stopping points for the birds to rest and feed. One recorded visitor to the area is the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*), of which there are possibly fewer than 360 left in the world ².

In 2019, rangers detected a total of 16,429 meters of net snares and in 2020, they detected 31,316 meters, a 90% increase ³.

The Southern Cardamom REDD+ rangers have risen to the challenge to protect these birds and have successfully removed colossal amounts of netting to protect the bird species on this important and majestic migration.

1. BirdLife International (n.d.). East Asia/Australasia Flyway. BirdLife Factsheets.
2. BirdLife International (2018). *Calidris pygmaea*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2018: e.T22693452A134202771. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305>
3. Wildlife Alliance (2019, 2020) Cardamom Forest Protection Program Total Results.



Collaboration to remove the threat of land grabbing

Land grabbing is the largest threat of deforestation in Cambodia. The recent sub decree to grant land to people who have lived in Protected Areas for more than 15 years has unfortunately emboldened groups of organized land grabbers who are working together to illegally lay claims to land in Protected Areas.

They have quickly built rudimentary houses and planted large numbers of quick growing fruits, such as bananas, to give the impression that they have been settled on the land for years instead of weeks.

While not directly in the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project area, the project has seen an increase in the use of these “fly huts” for land grabbing in recent months in Protected Areas to the North of the project.

Fortunately, the Provincial Authorities have seen through these transparent land grabs and are supporting Wildlife Alliance in removing the fly huts from the Protected Areas. This has required regular aerial surveys and analysis of satellite imagery. The rangers have been able to locate the fly huts quickly after they are erected, working with Provincial Authority task groups to ensure that they are removed, and signs installed notifying would-be land grabbers that the area is protected.

The collaboration between Wildlife Alliance and the Provincial Authorities has allowed a stronger working relationship and more cooperation on other matters.

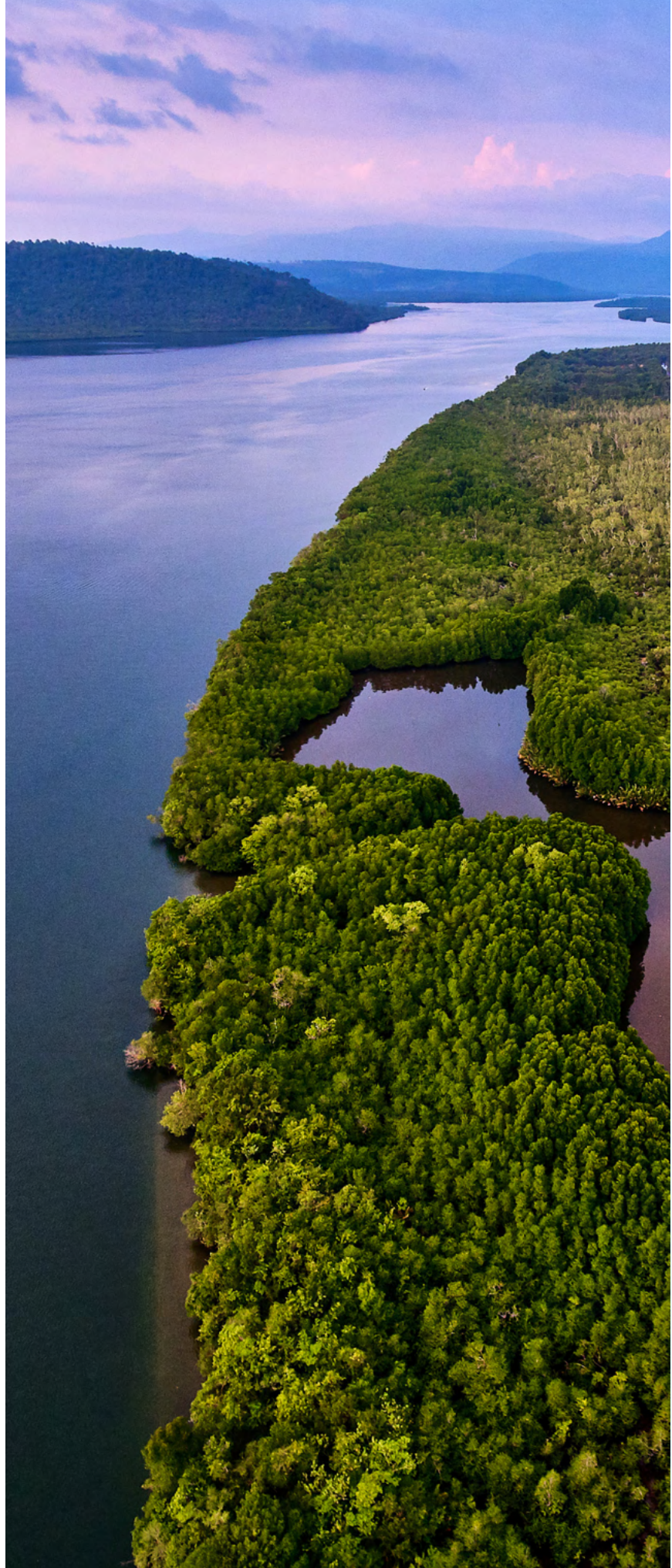




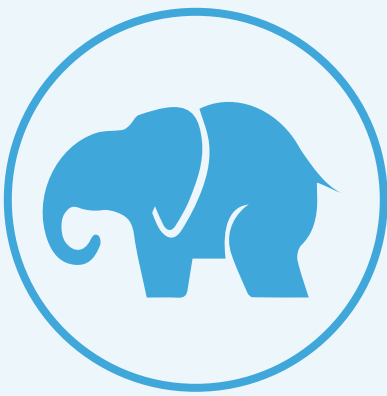
Forest Impacts



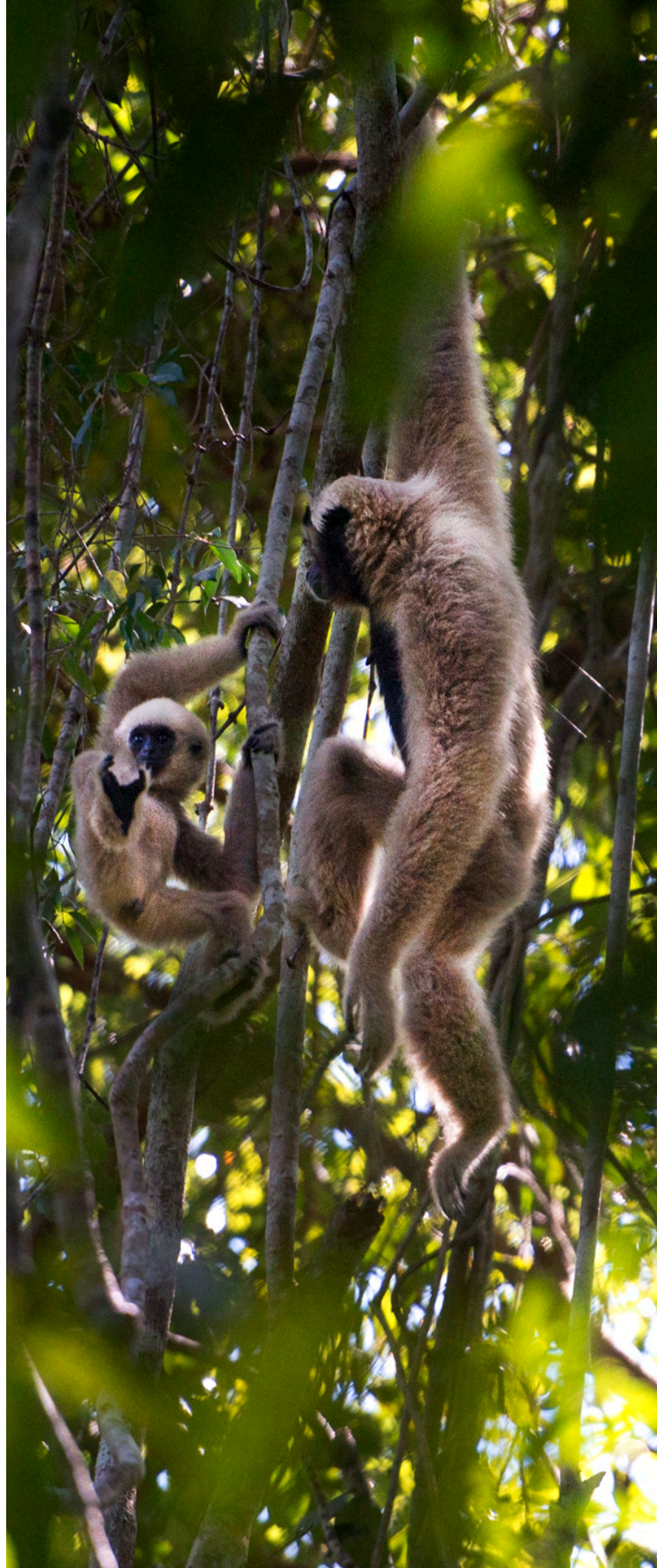
- ✓ **3,549** land encroachment cases brought
- ✓ **5,766** chainsaws seized
- ✓ Annual deforestation rate reduced to **<0.074%** (vs. nat average ~**0.93%**)



Wildlife Impacts



- ✓ **339,238** wildlife snares removed
- ✓ **6,492** illegal hunting camps dismantled
- ✓ **6,961** live wildlife rescued
- ✓ **Zero** poaching of Asian elephants (2006-2020)



Impact Over Time

Community Impacts



- ✓ **\$190,489** average annual income to 15 villages as a direct result of Community Based Ecotourism (CBET) in the past 3 years 2018-2020
- ✓ **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



An aerial photograph of a river winding through a lush, green forest. The river is dark blue and reflects the surrounding trees. The forest is dense with various shades of green, and some rocky areas are visible along the riverbanks.

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One forest at a time

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