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LANDSCAPE PROFILE: EASTERN PLAINS LANDSCAPE

REVIVING ABUNDANCE: RESTORING BIODIVERSITY IN CAMBODIA'S EASTERN PLAINS LANDSCAPE

WWF's mission is to halt the degradation of the planet's natural environment and build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. To fulfil this mission in Cambodia, we safeguard biological diversity and promote sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of all.

The Eastern Plains Landscape (EPL) is recognized as the largest intact dry forest in Indochina and one of the world's most significant regions for biodiversity. Protected areas within the EPL, particularly in Mondulkiri province, support globally significant species, including Cambodia's largest Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) population and the world's largest banteng (*Bos javanicus*) population. The landscape also contains breeding ground for the exceptionally rare Siamese crocodile (*Crocodylus siamensis*). EPL is home to over 334 bird species, at least 14 of which are globally threatened according to the IUCN.

For many generations, this landscape's resources have sustained the livelihoods of diverse communities residing within and around it. Notably, indigenous communities have emerged as committed stewards of their ancestral lands, protecting and nurturing their natural heritage.

EXPECTED IMPACTS

Our work in EPL communities focuses on developing alternative livelihoods, as sustainable income sources will alleviate poverty and pressure on natural resources. We aim to establish sustainable supply chains and financing mechanisms for key commodities like rice, pepper, rubber and cassava as well as support livestock raising and fisheries management. We are also strengthening civil society and community-based organizations to foster community participation in forest governance and management. Other efforts include combating poaching, wildlife trafficking, land encroachment, habitat degradation and illegal logging. Finally, we undertake research and monitoring of biodiversity and socio-economic conditions to ensure that our interventions target areas facing the greatest threats.

LANDSCAPE FOCUS

Cambodia's EPL spans over 14,000 km² and consists of a unique mosaic habitat, making it one of the world's most biologically important regions in terms of species diversity and endemism. WWF-Cambodia focuses interventions in and around two key protected areas in this landscape: Srepok and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuaries.

THEMATIC APPROACHES



**Community
engagement**



**Protected areas and
law enforcement**



**Biodiversity research
and monitoring**

Srepok Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Size:** 372,707 hectares
- **Key Species:** Banteng, gaur (*Bos gaurus*), Eld's deer (*Rucervus eldii*), wild pig (*Sus scrofa*), Asiatic jackal (*Canis aureus*), dhole (*Cuon alpinus*), sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*), civet (*Viverridae*) and various primates.
- **Birdlife:** "Trapeangs," or waterholes, serve as breeding grounds for sarus cranes (*Grus antigone*), giant and white-shouldered ibis (*Thaumatibis gigantea* and *Pseudibis davisoni*) and adjutants (*Leptoptilos*). They are also nesting sites for hornbills, woodpeckers and critically endangered vultures.
- **Reptiles and Fish:** Small populations of Siamese crocodiles inhabit the Srepok River, alongside various turtle and tortoise species. Confiscated reptiles from poachers highlight the ongoing impact of the wildlife trade on these areas. Native fish species include the rare seven-striped barb (*Probarbus jullieni*), giant carp (*Catlocarpio siamensis*) and even freshwater stingrays (*Potamotrygonidae*).

Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Size:** 262,642 hectares
- **Habitat:** Hilly evergreen forests, open dry dipterocarp woodlands and seasonally wet grasslands.
- **Key Species:** Asian elephant, banteng, gaur, endangered Eld's deer, clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), marbled cat (*Pardofelis marmorata*), jungle cat (*Felis chaus*), dhole, green peafowl (*Pavo muticus*) and white-wing duck (*Asarcornis scutulata*).

THREATS

Poaching for meat – whether for local subsistence or regional trade – has caused a sharp decline in wildlife populations and overall density. In addition, various development projects such as hydropower, mining, roads and economic land concessions, in combination with illegal logging and unsustainable extraction of natural resources, are further threatening the landscape. Shifting seasonal patterns and extreme weather events induced by climate change only compound these issues. With the concerning rise in private interests taking over land, local communities are increasingly vulnerable, as the natural resources they rely on come under greater pressure during rapid change.



“ Forests and wildlife are not just natural treasures; they are the very foundation of our community's well-being, providing clean air, fresh water and essential resources for our livelihoods. Preserving them ensures a sustainable future where both nature and humanity can flourish together. ”

- Brauy Khveik,
Leader of Trapeang Khaerm CPA

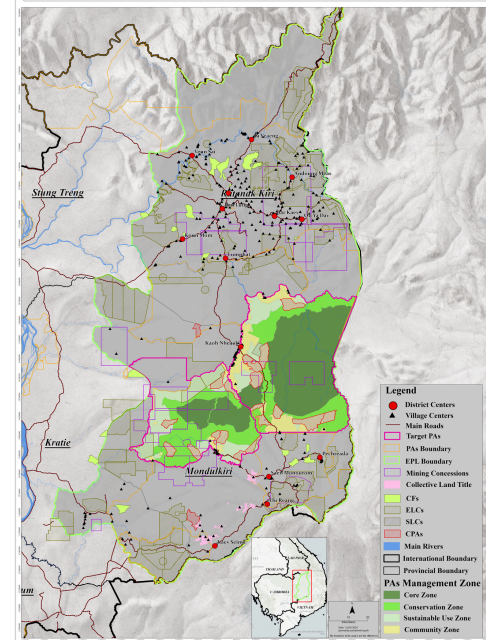
SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

EPL's lush forests are home to the world's largest population of banteng, a stunning wild cattle species. The graceful creatures are found in open areas close to dense thickets or forests. Despite a 95% decline in numbers since the late 1960s, Cambodia now boasts the largest number of banteng globally, with over 1,500 individuals. These creatures symbolize the richness of Cambodia's wildlife and a greater commitment to conservation. representing hope for preserving endangered species worldwide.



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OVERVIEW OF EASTERN PLAIN LANDSCAPE



EMBLEMATIC SPECIES AT RISK



BANTENG



GAUR



ELD'S DEER



ASIAN ELEPHANT



DHOLE



SUN BEAR