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Joint Press Release

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Urgent action needed to protect ungulate species as their populations dwindled over the past decade

Despite the increased law enforcement efforts by the Royal Government's Ministry of Environment, WWF and all partners, ungulate populations in the Srepok and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuaries have suffered a dramatic decline in the past decade, and highlight the urgent need of unprecedented and innovative solutions to reverse the decline, a Ministry of Environment and WWF report on status of ungulates released today, revealed.

The results from a decade-long (2010-2020) ungulate monitoring programme in both wildlife sanctuaries demonstrated that Banteng, Muntjac, and Wild Pig populations have decreased by 72%, 52%, and 18% respectively when compared with the baseline population estimates from 2010-2011.

The monitoring efforts also documented very low encounter rates of Eld's Deer, Gaur and Sambar throughout the surveys, and suggests that only small and fragmented populations of these ungulate species still live in the landscape.

"The decline rates highlighted in the report is a wake-up call for us all, but presents us with a unique opportunity to reverse the declining trends," says **His Excellency Neth Pheaktra**, Secretary of State and Spokesman to the Ministry of Environment, adding that the decline could have been worse if without the law enforcement and protected area actions thanks to the tireless patrols and protected area law enforcement efforts by the rangers from the Provincial Department of Environment of the Ministry of Environment, community patrolling teams, provincial authorities and WWF.

His Excellency Neth Pheaktra also described that although the decline of ungulates has been observed in the Srepok and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuaries, the population numbers of some of these ungulate species have increased or are stable in some other protected areas.

Cambodia is not a unique situation. Wildlife populations have declined globally over the past 50 years with an unprecedented average 68% drop in wildlife population sizes on land and in water in less than half a century across the world since 1970.

Historical hunting, and an unprecedented current poaching and snaring crisis fuelled by the illegal wildlife trade, is the primary cause of the severe depletion of ungulate species in Cambodia's Srepok and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuaries.



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Snares are a principal threat to the ungulate species in the landscape - and also a major contributor towards the rapid diminishing of the Indochinese leopard who prey on those ungulates along with other predators in the area," says **Ms Milou Groenenberg**, WWF's Biodiversity Research & Monitoring Manager.

Although the '*Population Status of Ungulates*' report shows the situation is critical, there is still hope to save these wild animal species from extinction. But without immediate and innovative actions to counteract the key threats and their drivers, the biodiversity will continue to decline rapidly and ultimately disappear.

Mr Seng Teak, WWF Country Director, says that it is not too late to make a difference, but only if we start now at every level to take immediate collective conservation actions.

"The scientific findings in the report highlight the urgent need for comprehensive and innovative solutions in order to reverse the wildlife decline, while calling for better ways of managing, using and sharing natural resources," he elaborates.

The Ministry of Environment and WWF are working closely with local communities, and partners on developing intensive conservation measures to reduce poaching, and strengthen law enforcement. The Ministry of Environment and WWF are currently studying the possibilities for the implementation of a comprehensive ungulate recovery programme, urgently required to reverse the declining population trends, while tackling the root cause of wildlife trade.

With the funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union (EU), German Government (BMZ), Belgium Government (DGD), UN Environment, GEF, Swedish Government (Sida), IKEA, Welthungerhilfe (WHH), Humanscale and WWF Networks (WWF-Belgium, WWF-Germany, WWF-Sweden, WWF-Switzerland, WWF-US), natural resource management in the Srepok and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuaries are protected through the focus on the biodiversity monitoring and research, the capacity building for law enforcement, the fight against illegal wildlife hunting, trade and illegal logging, and the prevention of illegal land encroachment, the local community engagement in livelihoods improvements and sustainable natural resource management.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supports ungulate survey using line transects method from 2018-2020. We thank the monitoring and research team, the co-authors of the report and everyone who contributed to the research.



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The Ministry of Environment calls on all people to stop consuming wild meat and all other wildlife products. “We urge all people across Cambodia to say no to wild meat and participate in conserving the Kingdom’s natural resources,” says His Excellency Neth Pheaktra, Secretary of State to the Ministry.

Notes to Editors:

- **About the study: Line Transect Surveys using Distance Sampling Statistical Framework**

Line transects are roughly 3km long and stretch in a north-south gradient in random places in the sanctuaries. Researchers walk along these transect lines slowly and quietly between the early morning and late afternoon and record any species they observe as well as the distance of that animal to the line. This distance data is used to model ‘detection probabilities’ for each species and with that information we can estimate population size. The surveyors achieved 116 lines in total and walked each line 8 times, totalling a distance of 2,761 km during the surveys in Srepok and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuaries combined. They recorded the number of individuals (cluster size), as well as their sex, age classes, where possible.

- **The survey team composition:**

The survey team consists of WWF’s wildlife experts, members of the Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Program, rangers from the Provincial Department of Environment of MoE, and community research members from the Community Protected Areas adjacent to both Srepok and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuaries.

- The Srepok and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuaries are the beating heart of the Eastern Plains Landscape, and are home to many endangered wildlife populations of global significance. Today, the Eastern Plains Landscape is one of the world’s last strongholds for Asian elephant population, with more than 300 animals in both protected areas combined.
- The Srepok and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuaries are also home to critically endangered Indochinese leopard, Siamese crocodile, and globally endangered large birds, including White-shouldered Ibis, Giant Ibis, Vultures, Green Peafowl, as well as globally endangered primates.

[Link to photos and video clips](#)