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WWF-Cambodia

21, Street 322,  
Boeung Keng Kang I,  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
P.O. Box: 2467

Tel: +855 23 218 034

Fax: +855 23 211 909

[www.wwf.org.kh](http://www.wwf.org.kh)  
[www.panda.org/greatermekong](http://www.panda.org/greatermekong)  
[wwfcambodia@wwf.org.kh](mailto:wwfcambodia@wwf.org.kh)

Press Release

For Immediate Release

## Endangered Eld's deer spotted in Mekong landscape for the first time in five years

Kratie province – Four Eld's deers (*Rucervus eldii*) were photographed for the first time in five years by camera traps that were placed in the WWF's supported Sambor Wildlife Sanctuary located in the Mekong Flooded Forest Landscape. The species is listed as Endangered in both Cambodia's Forestry Law and on the IUCN's red list.

Conservationists are thrilled to see the rare images of three adult females and one juvenile Eld's deer roaming the sanctuary, as they examined this week 1,710 photographs produced between August-September by the camera traps that were deployed at different locations in the sanctuary with a total area of 50,093 hectares. "We are very excited about this discovery," said **Mr Eam Sam Un, Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Manager** with WWF.

The camera trapping survey efforts, with the financial support from WWF-Belgium and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), are conducted jointly by researchers and rangers from the Kratie's Provincial Department of Environment, Community Forestry, WWF staff and members of Community Patrol Team to monitor wildlife in the sanctuary. WWF's scientists described the camera trap event as a significant discovery for conservation in the Mekong landscape.

"The photographs provide evidence that our conservation efforts are paying off, raising hopes for the protection of the animal in the country and region," said **Mr Seng Teak, WWF Country Director**.

Aside from the Eld's deers, the photographs also documented the presence of red muntjac, wild pig, small indian civet, common palm civet, as well as large bird species such as the endangered green peafowl and vulnerable lesser adjutant.

A report on threatened species published by IUCN in 2015 showed the population of Eld's deer has scattered across the globe with an estimate of less than 700 individuals, and with a small subpopulation remaining in Cambodia's protected forests. WWF has been working closely with the Cambodian Government at all levels to support the management of the Sambo Wildlife Sanctuary, where habitat loss and poaching for meat and trade are among major known threats to the species survival.

During the first half of this year, joint law enforcement efforts by rangers of the Provincial Department of Environment, members of the local communities living around and adjacent to the sanctuary, local authorities and WWF staff have stopped 33 cases of land encroachment involving a total area of 594 hectares, with 102 illegally installed wooden poles removed, five tractors and one excavator confiscated. The interventions also cracked down on 36 cases of illegal logging, with 23

timber pieces and 11 chainsaws confiscated. In parallel, the law enforcement team has removed 278 snares and traps, as well as five sets of electric-wire snare from the protected area.

“We commend all law enforcement actors for playing their important role to regularly patrol the Wildlife Sanctuary and reinforce the implementation of the Protected Areas and Forestry Laws,” **Mr Seng Teak said**. “These efforts are a major deterrent to forest and wildlife crimes, thus helping wildlife free from fear and stress as they can live freely in a safe environment in the sanctuary,” he added.

Biodiversity research and law enforcement are among the key components for protected areas in the Mekong Landscape under the management of Ministries of Environment and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. WWF-Cambodia has over the past two decades been monitoring wildlife species both on land and under the water, while providing active support in the implementation and enforcement of the forestry and fishery laws, complementing other WWF initiatives on community engagement and livelihoods development to improve local economies.

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**For more information, please contact:**

TEP Asnarith, Head of Communications, Advocacy, Knowledge Management  
WWF Office in Cambodia  
[asnarith.tep@wwf.org.kh](mailto:asnarith.tep@wwf.org.kh)  
Mobile: 012 957 919

**Notes to editors:**

Link for downloading images: <https://rb.gy/vvi7tu>

**Camera Trap Survey**

Camera trap surveys are an essential part of our research program to document the biodiversity in target areas, thus increasing knowledge of wildlife distribution, home range, and contributing to the effort to estimate wildlife populations in the areas.

**About Sambo Wildlife Sanctuary**

In October 2018, the Sambo Wildlife Sanctuary, situated in Kratie’s Sambo district, was declared “Protected Wildlife Sanctuary” by Government sub-decree together with another protected area called Prasob Wildlife Sanctuary. These sanctuaries support the most intact forests and riverine habitats in the Mekong landscape, with relatively low human densities. A total of at least 11 large mammal species, 56 species of amphibians and reptiles, 683 species of plants, at least 215 bird species and 223 native fish species were recorded during surveys in 2006-2007. The forest and river systems are vital sources of food and income for local communities. In addition, the natural ecosystems help people cope with climate change, floods and droughts.

**About WWF**

WWF is an independent conservation organization, with over 30 million followers and a global network active in nearly 100 countries. Our mission is to stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world’s biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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