



WWF *for a living planet*

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
www.panda.org/greatermekong
wwfcambodia@wwf.org.kh

Press Release

For Immediate Release

High-risk trade in wildlife threatens ecosystems and risks exposure to zoonotic diseases

A snaring crisis is decimating wildlife in Southeast Asia and increasing the risk of zoonotic disease transmission to humans, warns a new report from WWF that estimates for the first time the number of snares in the protected areas of several countries in the region.

An estimated 12.3 million snares threaten wildlife in the protected areas of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam – a group of countries that are at the centre of the regional snaring crisis, according to the report *Silence of the Snares: Southeast Asia's Snaring Crisis*.

These rudimentary traps, often made from wire or cable, increase close contact between humans and wildlife and the likelihood of zoonotic disease spillover. In fact, researchers have identified many of the animals targeted by snaring, including wild pig, palm civets, and pangolins, as among the highest risk for zoonotic disease transmission.

"Indiscriminately killing and maiming, snares are wiping out the region's wildlife, from tigers and elephants to pangolins and palm civets, and emptying its forests. These species don't stand a chance unless Southeast Asian governments urgently tackle the snaring crisis," said Stuart Chapman, Lead of the WWF Tigers Alive Initiative.

Driven in large part by the demand in urban areas for wildlife meat and wildlife parts, often seen as a delicacy, snares impact more than 700 of the region's terrestrial mammal species, including some of the region's most threatened species, such as the asian elephant, tiger, saola, eld's deer and banteng.

The report showed a total of 234,291 snares have been removed from five protected areas in Cambodia between 2010-2019. Snares indiscriminately kill and maim – animals can sometimes languish for days or weeks before dying from their injuries, and in the rare case an animal escapes, it will often later die from injury or infection.

"Snares are the principal threat to tigers in the region - and a major contributor to the fact they are now presumed extinct in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam," said Mr Seng Teak, Country Director of WWF-Cambodia.

This snaring crisis is also a key factor that leads to the population declines of other predators in the WWF's supported protected areas such as Indochinese leopards, clouded leopards, dholes and the prey on which these animals depend, like banteng, muntjac, wild pig, gaur, eld's deer and sambar deer.

"I commend the law enforcement efforts by the rangers and law enforcement officers from the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and I'm also encouraged by the 2019 Mondulkiri Governor's Circular No. 5 prohibiting the purchase, sale, transport and consumption of wildlife species, with positive impact on the reduction of bushmeat availability in local markets and restaurants," Mr Teak said.

"Snaring remains a major concern to wildlife survival. And removing snares is not enough. Strengthened legislation, effective prosecution and increased penalty are crucial to end the trade in wild animals that are major targets for snaring – especially the ungulates, birds and reptiles which are at high risk of transmitting diseases to humans," he added.

The COVID-19 crisis demonstrates that systemic changes must be made to address the environmental drivers of pandemics. In the midst of this tragedy there is an opportunity to heal our relationship with nature and mitigate risks of future pandemics but a better future starts with the decisions governments, companies and people in the Southeast Asia region, Cambodia included, take today.

WWF is advocating a 'One Health' approach linking the health of people, animals and our shared environment and urges this to be included in decision making on wildlife and land use change. This should also be incorporated within all business and financing decisions, particularly related to global health.

For more information, please contact:

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

Notes to editors:

Download the report for more detail: <https://wwf.to/3f8rzTb>
Link to download photos: <https://rb.gy/xww248>

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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