



The WWF Cambodia Newsletter

Vol. 1, Issue 4 • Oct-Dec 2006

WWF Greater Mekong - Cambodia Country Programme

Nests of critically endangered vulture species found in Cambodia's Northeast

Text by Communications Unit — Photo by Song Chansocheat/WCS

There was jubilation among Cambodian vulture conservationists when a recent survey team comprising of staff from WWF's Dry Forest Species Project, and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) found seven active nests of the critically endangered Slender-billed Vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*) in Cambodia's Northeast.



Slender-billed Vulture adult female guards her nest at Phnom Ta Prom, near the Srepok River.

According to WWF's Dry Forest species project manager, Dr Andy Maxwell, given the rarity of this species this may be the first documented sighting of Slender-billed Vulture nests in Cambodia.

"This is really a remarkable find and a credit to the observation skills of the survey team," he said.

The team included WWF/Forestry Administration provincial counterpart coordinator, Duong Kong, his community counterpart Moeung Kuy from Sre Sranok village and Song Chansocheat from WCS/Ministry of Environment (MoE) who is also Project Manager of the Cambodian Vulture Conservation Project.

The survey team not only found seven active nests but also saw two more currently inactive nests. "Since the site is remote, the chances of us mounting a successful protection and breeding support plan are good, at least for this year," Dr Maxwell said.

"However, in the long run, this site is under threat, targeted as a potential economic concession, and also subject to flooding if the planned Lower Srepok 3 Dam is ever built."

Vultures are threatened with extinction across South and Southeast Asia, with the populations in South Asia declining catastrophically over the past 10 years, due

to widespread veterinary use of the anti-inflammatory medicine Diclofenac (for cattle) in South Asia.

The Lower Mekong Dry Forest Ecoregion has become a last bastion of hope for recovery of vultures, with Cambodia's Eastern and Northern Plains becoming focal areas for the ecoregion.

"The ecological role of vultures as scavengers is absolutely essential for healthy ecosystems, and the conservation of the landscapes of northern and eastern Cambodia are key for the successful preservation of the species," Dr Maxwell said.

"Unfortunately resources are stretched very thinly over this project, and WWF Cambodia and our partners in WCS and Birdlife International urgently need help with funding to continue this important project," he said.

The area where the vulture nests were found is rich in other globally threatened species, such as tiger, Eld's deer, banteng, and large waterbirds, including Lesser Adjutant and White-shouldered Ibis, which is the reason why WWF supports the community counterparts.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Landmark fisheries project ready to go	2
Ranger training sets standard	3
Rattan under the international spotlight	4
Leopard study breaks new ground	5
WWF partnership - CRDT	6
Staff profile	7
Volunteer activity	9

អត្ថបទព័ត៌មាន ជាភាសាខ្មែរសំរាប់លេខនេះ នឹងមានផ្សាយនៅ លេខក្រោយ (មិនា ០៧) Due to delays in translation services, Khmer versions of our leading stories will appear in our next issue.

What's in a name?

Quite a lot really: the name of our publication has been changed from Bulletin to Newsletter to reflect the more detailed description of the activities we hope to cover in each issue.

Every quarter, we try to bring you up-to-date with WWF Cambodia's activities and project news. To continually improve our efforts to do this, we encourage you to let us know what you think of each publication.

for a living planet

Notes from the Field

Landmark community fisheries project ready to go in Cambodia's Mondulkiri Protected Forest (MPF)

Text and photos by Martin von Kaschke, Srepok Wilderness Area (SWA) Project Technical Advisor

On his third visit to Cambodia, WWF Germany's freshwater biodiversity expert, Dr Petr Obrdlik declared that the community, WWF and its partner groups were now ready to implement a fully fledged community fisheries program in the SWA area.

Dr Obrdlik, through the WWF Living Mekong Programme (of WWF GMP), has been assisting WWF Cambodia to assess the viability of community fishing in its project areas for the past two and a half years.



One of the ways WWF Cambodia hopes to assist communities is to help them harness benefits from local resources.

"I have found that communities are excited about the support they will be receiving in setting up community fisheries as well as the SWA project's proposed tourism development. They are hoping to find ways to become involved in an equitable partnership when ecotourism becomes viable and operational in 2009," Dr Obrdlik said.

Leading the fisheries project will be newly seconded Fisheries Officer, Mr Kheav Lux, who will work closely with the SWA's Community Extension Team in Koh Mahule Leu village. This village-based post will, in the future, become a focus-point for SWA project assistance to the northern community cluster of the MPF.

Community challenges

Local communities in the area face a number of challenges as they attempt to keep pace with rapid development in other Cambodian provinces. One of the ways WWF Cambodia hopes to assist communities is to help them harness benefits from local resources.

This is especially true in the north of Mondulkiri province, where communities rely heavily on aquatic resources - from the Srepok River and its tributaries.

With the Upper Srepok area - approximately 20 kms from the Vietnam border - included in the MPF's



From left to right: Amy Maling, Mrs and Mr Petr Obrdlik during a walk in the dry forest close to the SWAP's Headquarters, Merouch

proposed core conservation zone (where no fishing is allowed) it is of key importance to have the rest of the Upper Srepok River well managed for the benefit of the local communities.

In the future, the effective management of Cambodia's protected areas and forests will depend heavily on whether adequate community participatory approaches have been initiated.

Poorer rural communities are now able to tap into both government and NGO resources for assistance and the future of Cambodia's unique natural resources will rely on a joint and integrated approach to biodiversity and area management.

Srepok Wilderness Area Project - Activities Report

Administrative Activities

- * Computer and English language training for CET staff every Saturday.
- * Concept paper developed for McKnight grant
- * WWF Germany proposals developed

Field Activities and Training

- * SWAP teams conduct small mammal survey with Dr Nico Avenant from South Africa.
- * Finalise filming for the new documentary: "Establishing a Protected Area in Cambodia".

- * Community road clearing programme established
- * SWAP host visit by Dr Petr Obrdlik from WWF Germany.
- * Volunteers from Project Trust join the SWAP team
- * 3rd Annual Ranger Training was held at Merouch HQ.
- * Forestry Law training was started.
- * SWAP team assisted research into how communities actively use fire as a landscape management tool.
- * SWAP team member leads preparations for Ratanakiri study tour to investigate alternative livelihoods technologies.

for a living planet

Notes from the Field

Third annual ranger training sets standard for on-site conservation education

Text by Dr Tony Lynam and Martin von Kaschke — Photos by Jeff Delvarte and Martin von Kaschke



Group training activities at Merouch HQ

Training of staff at WWF's Srepok Wilderness Area (SWA) project reached new levels with the third successive on-site management course offered to 24 staff from WWF Cambodia, Conservation International and their government counterparts.

Course leaders, Dr Tony Lynam and Mr Pech Bunnat, from World Conservation Society's (WCS) Asia Programme, observed considerable progress in field staff performance for field conservation capacity.

"The training course is developed in such a way that staff are evaluated both before and after instruction in the various competencies (map and compass, GPS usage, data recording, patrol ethics and techniques)," Dr Lynam said.

"The relief and smiling faces at the hand-out of certificates when the training was successfully completed was evidence of a dedicated approach from all involved," he said.

A new aspect to this training was the attendance of two WWF female project staff. SWA data assistant, Miss

Att Sreynak was trained by Dr Lynam to be an Assistant Trainer, while Species project data assistant, Miss Nai Sikhoeun participated as a student in the program and surprised the gentlemen by achieving the second highest score of the course!

Also new to the training was an introductory module on use of camera traps for wildlife monitoring. This was taught by Jeff La Valette - developer of the new digital camera traps now being used in the MPF. Course participants managed to camera trap a family of Large-spotted Civets, Leopard Cat, a family of Smooth-coated Otters, a troop of Long-tailed Macaques. Even a leopard posed for a shot or two!

Building capacity and keeping staff motivated in this

remote area of Cambodia's north-east is key to successful integrated Protected Forest management and courses such as these are essential for building effective and dedicated teams!

Congratulations to all participants and many thanks to WCS Cambodia for providing staff to assist with the training programme.



CI and MPF/SWAP Forestry Administration, Community Rangers (MPF/SWAP), Military Police (CI) and Border Police (MPF/SWAP) patrol the foothills of Phnom (Khmer for mountain) Yang Ke.

Dry Forest Species Project - Activities Report

Administrative activities

- * Completed draft report: Liquid Resin Tapping, Scope of Threats and Biodiversity Conservation and Management Approaches in PPWS and SWAP", based on fieldwork in cooperation with the WWF CNRM unit.
- * Funding proposals submitted to US Fish and Wildlife Service, Asian Elephant Conservation Fund; and to Great Apes Conservation Fund.

Field Activities

- * Patrolling in Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary results in the following actions:

- * Turning away two groups looking for gold mine sites,
- * Confiscate electric fishing rigs, destroy 2 fishing fences
- * Confiscate 2 guns, one at Sre Khtong post, one at Memang
- * Vulture restaurants in October and December
- * Conducted awareness raising workshops in Hog Deer Conservation Area in 15 villages and 3 communes.
- * The 3rd International Eld's Deer Interest Group meeting in Phnom Penh.
- * Participation in ranger training in SWAP
- * Refresher training in biological monitoring.

for a living planet

Rattan under the international spotlight

Text by Koy Ra, Senior Officer, and Thibault Ledecq, Team Leader — Rattan project
Photo by Lic Vuthy and Khou Eang Hourt

Non timber forest product, Rattan, has been selected as an important species to work with in the Indochina region, under a special co-operation agreement on forest and cotton products between WWF and Scandinavian furniture company IKEA.

Rattan is a climber from the palm family with more than 600 species and 13 genera identified across the world. In the Indochina region, resources are mainly located in Lao PDR, (51 identified rattan species) and Cambodia, (14 identified species) with production and marketing activities taking place in Vietnam and Thailand.

The Sustainable Rattan Harvest and Product project - a joint initiative of WWF and IKEA - began in January 2006 with the gathering of up-to-date knowledge on the country dynamics of the rattan market. An overview of the conservation status of key species, both rare and commercially valuable in Lao PDR and Cambodia was also prepared.

In Cambodia, surveys were carried out in Kratie, Mondulkiri, Ratanakiri, Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, Banteay Meanchey and Udor Meanchey provinces by Lic Vuthy (then National Project Coordinator with WWF) and Khou Eang Hourt (WWF's rattan expert).

Twelve key rattan commercial species have been identified as potential for sustainable management in Cambodia: *Calamus erinaceus*, *Calamus godefroyi*, *Calamus palustris*, *Calamus viminalis*, *Calamus rudentum*, *Calamus salicifolius*, *Daemonorops jenkinsiana*, *Calamus tenuis*, *Calamus sp*, *Myrialepis paradoxa*, *Plectocomia sp*, *Korthalsia bejardii*.

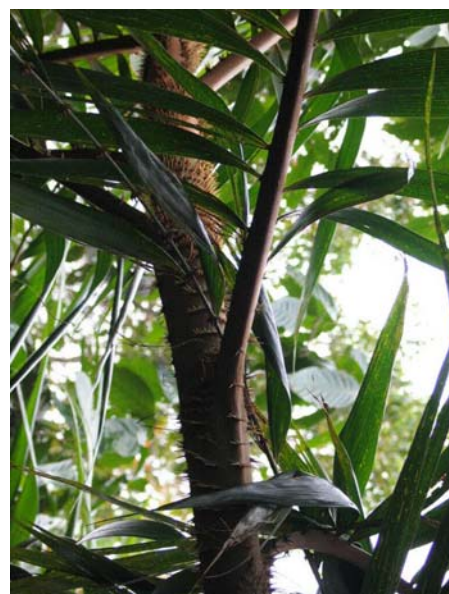
According to the survey results, *Calamus viminalis* and *C. palustris* may offer the best opportunities for plantation development due to their abilities to grow countrywide. These two rattan species were found in all survey sites and they are commonly used for mattress, basketry, and furniture.

Rattan resources in both Lao PDR and Cambodia have been heavily depleted due to over-harvesting, forest land encroachment and alternative land use projects.

Species such as *Daemonorops jenkinsiana*, *Calamus rudentum*, and Phdao Teuk Khmum (*Calamus sp.*) have been over harvested causing the species to be crucially threatened. Sustainable management or conservation strategies must be established before these species become extinct.

Rattan resources in both Lao PDR and Cambodia have been heavily depleted due to over-harvesting, forest land encroachment and alternative land use projects. At the same time demand for rattan from furniture manufacturers is increasing.

Phase two of the project is being implemented by Dr Koy Ra who joined WWF in October 2006. Within already selected project sites, WWF and its Cambodian partners, the Faculty of Forestry (Royal Agriculture University) and Save Cambodian Wildlife (SCW) will study threats and the potential for sustainable harvest of rattan as an incentive for local forest management regimes.



This rattan species is called *Myrialepis paradoxa* (Phdoa Reussey or Treh Chheu). It grows mostly in degraded areas such as Bokor National Park (Kampot province), Kampong Seila district (Koh Kong province).

Activities will include field research on growth and yield of specific rattan species as well a market chain analysis in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam.

For more information, please contact Dr Koy Ra, email Ra.koy@wwfgreatermekong.org



A rattan factory in Veal Renh, Sihanoukville where demand for rattan for furniture manufacture is increasing.

Field Research

Leopard study in the Srepok Wilderness Area

Text and photo by Chris Greenwood, Leopard picture: camera trap by SWAP team



Julia Chase-Grey has joined WWF Cambodia's SWA team for 2 months to undertake a preliminary study on the number and density of the

Indo-Chinese leopard and its prey in a dry forest habitat - the Mondulkiri Protected Forest.

by illegal hunting; how heavily leopards and their prey are being poached and the reasons, be they wildlife trade, poverty and/or human wildlife conflict.

Poverty link

Ms Chase-Grey says poverty is already known to be a major cause of illegal hunting, but developing sustainable alternative livelihoods is not easy, nor straightforward.

"As part of this study we hope to collect information on resident socio-economics and carry out an assessment of alternative livelihoods to hunting in order to offer some other options to local communities," she said.

Julia is a biology post-graduate student at Durham University in the UK. This study will form part of her PhD on leopard conservation and management.

"The Indo-chinese leopard, *Panthera pardus delacouri*, occupies a large range across Southeast Asia but very little information exists on the ecology or conservation of the leopard in Cambodia," Ms Chase-Grey said.

"Cambodia is a country where illegal hunting is the most immediate threat facing wildlife. Recent reports indicate that leopard is considered a high value species on the wildlife market, but no information exists on the level of threat that illegal hunting poses to the leopard or its prey."

By investigating local hunting and farming practices, she hopes to be able to shed some light on the threat posed



Camera trap photo of a leopard close to the Merouch HQ, MPF, taken during camera trap training activities.

Rattan study draws on Cambodian University talent

Three students and three lecturers from the Faculty of Forestry at Cambodia's Royal University of Agriculture have been selected to assist WWF's Rattan Project in a key study of Rattan growth characteristics.

In preparation for the study, the group attended a two-day theory and three-day field practice course focusing on rattan

identification, taxonomy, morphology and ecology.

The group is expected to use this knowledge to identify and document rattan collection methods, markets and products, as well as help establish a permanent sample plot (PSP) for further study of the species in Cambodia.



Photo by Dr Koy Ra

(Photo) Back row: two lecturers, Mr. Khou Eanghourt, Front row: a student and a representative from SCW in the process of establishing a PSP.

Community Natural Resource Management Unit - Activities Report

Field Activities

- * Contributed Khmer sub-title for SWAP video.
- * Developed CPA and PLUP work plan for the whole project.
- * Facilitated establishment of Commune NREM Committee in Chong Plah Commune.
- * Received final document on Rapid Geographical Assessment report in two languages, Khmer and English.

Meetings/Training Activities

- * Reviewed and planned for the Biodiversity Corridors Initiative project.
- * Finalized key partners section of CNRM Unit Strategic Plan

- * Attended and facilitated at Wetland Alliance workshop in Kratie.
- * Attended training on Soil Classification in Kampong Thom
- * Contributed to the RECOFTC publication "A Fair Share?" on experiences in Benefit Sharing in Cambodia.
- * Environment Education Flip Chart published and training provided to key staff.
- * Submitted to the McKnight Foundation - Southeast Asia Grant Program.
- * Successful in grant application from the Australian Embassy for Environmental Awareness Flip Chart.

for a living planet

WWF Partnership

CRDT - WWF's partner for grassroots development

Text by Or Channy, Executive Director, CRDT — Photo by Chris Greenwood

WWF Cambodia has a number of partners with which it works to secure positive outcomes in its range of projects. Here we profile one of our most recent project partners, the Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT) which carries out rural development projects in Kratie, Stung Treng and Mondulkiri provinces.

The Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT) is a local NGO formed in 2001 to undertake rural development projects which improve the living standards of subsistence communities while at the same time supporting environmental conservation throughout rural Cambodia.

In early 2006, CRDT signed a cooperation agreement with WWF Cambodia and is working with WWF's Cambodian

Mekong Dolphin Conservation Project (CMDCP) on a livelihood development project. The 'Dolphins for Development' project will touch the lives of more than 3,000 people, living along the Mekong from Kratie to Stung Treng provinces and all the way to the Laotian border.

This includes 11 villages along the Mekong River which are adjacent to the 9 main dolphin pools. The project aims to help fishing communities to develop alternative livelihoods in support of the conservation of Mekong dolphin and fish stocks, concentrating on agricultural diversification to improve food security, generate household income, and improving water and sanitation.

The agriculture components include training to improve the agricultural techniques, rice cultivation, home garden development, mushroom production, and small livestock husbandry and aquaculture ponds. CRDT encourages people to grow a wide range of food and to diversify their production appropriately and sustainably using local resources.

In addition to agriculture programs, we are also working to improve water and sanitation through the construction and installation of water wells, rope pumps and rain water collectors with the participation of beneficiaries. To improve sanitation, CRDT also provides and encourages people to build toilets to enhance a clean village environment. Traditionally, rural people go to the bush behind their homes which pollutes the village environment. This gets worse in the rainy season when the villages are surrounded by floods and the wastes are washed to the river. With the supply



Fish ponds are becoming a very important way of developing alternative livelihoods for communities to help support the conservation of Mekong dolphin and fish stocks.

of clean water facilities and toilets, people can reduce water-borne diseases and improve their health.

CRDT also plays an important role at grassroots level in educating local communities to protect the environment and value their natural resources by emphasizing the strong linkage between their livelihoods and the environment.

Implementation strategy

Our staff members are all from rural backgrounds and live in our target villages. By living and working closely with local people, we have more chance to build relationships with them, learn about the real problems they face and assist them in finding solutions.

CRDT requires the village people we work with to get involved with all stages of activities throughout the project cycle to develop a sense of project understanding and ownership, as well as reduce the project costs, and support long term sustainability.



CRDT advisor Adam Star demonstrates one of the water pumps his organization has installed in the Kratie Province.

New Publication - text by Merrill Halley



"A Fair Share? Experiences in Benefit Sharing from Community-managed Resources in Asia" is the culmination of national workshops in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam and a regional workshop in Lao PDR.

WWF Greater Mekong Programme and Regional Community Forestry Training Centre (RECOFTC) initiated the USAID funded workshops due to a concern about what benefits communities actually gain through community-based natural resource management initiatives within the region.

The publication provides an overview of key definitions and concepts, and outlines the approach used in three countries to reflect on benefit sharing processes and outcomes. There are reports from the three national workshops and country - based case studies. For Cambodia the community-based ecotourism project of Yak Loam is featured.

The efforts of WWF's CNRM Unit and the CBNRM Learning Institute were instrumental in the holding of the Cambodian national workshop, which saw people from many resource sectors come together to discuss the issue. Well, do communities in the region gain 'A Fair Share' in CBNRM activities? You will have to read the book to gain an insight into that question, but the publication does conclude with a number of thoughts for the future, including:

- * Supportive and clear legal frameworks that secure the flow of benefits to communities are desperately needed, particularly so in Cambodia.
- * Access to high value resources and commercial use is important to enable better flow of benefits to communities.
- * More attention to local governance arrangements is needed to understand how they can effectively facilitate equitable benefit sharing.

For copies of the publication please contact Cheam Mony CNRM Unit WWF Cambodia or electronic copies can be downloaded from the RECOFTC website www.recoftc.org

for a living planet

Staff Profile

When Doves volunteer to help Dolphins

Text by Comms unit — Photo by Chris Greenwood



Australian based VIDA program.

Based in Katie for the next 18 months, the couple will be working with the Cambodian Mekong Dolphin Conservation Project (CMDCP) on the critically endangered population of Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin.

"My principle role with the program will be to investigate dolphin adult and calf mortalities events and implement protocols and training to build capacity for further epidemiological and behavioural research," Verné said.

Verné is well qualified for the job, she is both a veterinarian and holds a Bachelor

of Animal Science in Marine Mammal Research. For the past 5 years she has been voluntarily investigating cetacean mortality in Australia and has carried out studies on the effect that ecotourism has on dolphin behaviour.

Verné is currently midway through completing her Masters Degree in Veterinary Conservation Medicine. As if all that was not exhausting enough on its own - she is hoping to secure a PhD scholarship to further her research work in the near future.

New career paths

With a background in retail and technology management, David's job as a veterinary technician, assisting Verné, may seem a surprising career change to some.

But as David points out: "those who know me know how much animals and wildlife are a part of who I am."

"My role with WWF will primarily be working on the CMDCP project, assisting with dolphin post mortems, maintaining a database of all the samples, and establishing a fully functional post mortem room. I will also be conducting river management and behavioural studies of the Mekong dolphin populations to determine the long-term impacts of ecotourism.

WWF's Dolphin project manager, Richard Zanre said is he was delighted that Verné and husband David could join the program.

"We are very lucky to have a qualified vet of the caliber of Verné as a volunteer on the program. Her previous experience with dolphins will be a great boost to our conservation work. Similarly, David's technical and management experience will be put to good use in getting many aspects of our project up and running," he said.

Bart Kluskens joins WWF-Cambodia's dolphin team



Also joining WWF's Dolphin project as a volunteer is toxicologist, Bart Kluskens, from the Netherlands.

Before coming to Cambodia he worked at Akzo Nobel in the Netherlands for six years in the department of Environmental Chemistry focussing on aquatic ecotoxicology.

Bart said despite the fact that his home country is flat and crowded it is very diverse in landscape.

"When I was younger I always was busy with nature and science, and outdoor activities such as hiking, scuba diving and rock climbing. Later on I decided to combine my first two hobbies and I started studying toxicology. The effect of contaminants in organisms always interested me", he said.

Bart will be helping the Dolphin team assess if any toxic substances in the Mekong river are affecting dolphin survival.

"Being in Cambodia is a great opportunity for me to focus more on my interests and skills. At WWF I will focus on pollution from industry, agriculture and towns that are a possible threat to the Irrawaddy dolphin", he said.

Cambodian Mekong Dolphin Conservation Project - Activities Report

Administrative Activities

- * 2007 – 2009 work plan submitted to Commission for Dolphin Conservation and Ecotourism Development
- * Translation of the 2007 – 2009 project work plan into Khmer for relevant agencies
- * Collaborative planning for environmental education work with Monks in 2007 in conjunction with Association of Buddhists for the Environment.
- * Successfully produced the following awareness materials: Khmer and English dolphin leaflets, dolphin stickers, student notebooks, environmental awareness flip charts and dolphin and project activity tourism awareness posters
- * Recruited a qualified field vet and volunteer project assistant
- * Provided film and interview footage on project activities for fundraising purposes
- * Successfully arranged the first Mekong biodiversity survey

Field Activities

- * Twenty six days of patrolling the 190 km stretch of Mekong dolphin habitat. Conducting general dolphin conservation awareness activities with local fishermen, four villagers, six pagodas and eight schools adjacent to key dolphin habitat in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces.
- * CMDCP has been successful in recovering dolphin mortalities through its network of community contacts along the river. Two dead baby dolphins were recovered, necropsy undertaken and tissue samples correctly stored.
- * Monthly net and dolphin distribution monitoring patrols were conducted from Kratie to Cambodian-Lao border. A total of 100 illegal nets were found at core dolphin habitats. Dolphin sightings data recorded and submitted to DoF.
- * Calendar checking data on dolphin sightings at 18 core dolphin sites were collected.

for a living planet

Staff Profile

Vinn Bunna - conserving dolphin on the Mekong

Text and photo by Chris Greenwood



One aim of this newsletter is to help WWF Cambodia staff get to know their colleagues. Each issue we will be featuring at least one staff member and give you a little more information on their past, present and hopes for the future. This issue we introduce Vinn Bunna, who since June 2006 has been working as a Community Awareness Officer with the Cambodian Mekong Dolphin Conservation Project (CMDCP).

In this role he is responsible for disseminating dolphin conservation information to people who live adjacent or around the nine deep dolphin pools in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces.

He conducts village, school and pagoda awareness workshops and works to build partnerships with likeminded NGOs to extend WWF's reach into communities.

"One of the groups I work with closely is the Community Rural Development

Team (CRDT) - working with grassroots communities on alternative livelihood and community development. CRDT promote a range of grassroots initiatives such as, fish and livestock raising, improved sanitation systems and intensive rice production, with the aim of reducing illegal fishing in the deep dolphin pools," Bunna said.

Upon gaining his qualifications in Fishery Science in 1999, he worked as a Food Security Project Officer with Save the Children UK, where he helped establish a rice seed bank credit program and strengthened community understanding of agriculture techniques.

He spent three years as Technical Facilitators' Team leader with the Seila Natural Resources and Environment Management (NREM) Program where he was involved in advocacy on behalf of commune councils, establishing community forestry and fishery and managed a team of nine NREM Provincial Technical Facilitators.

Bunna is keen to develop and apply his experience in environment management

to habitat protection on the Mekong River.

"I'm very excited to be working with CMDCP because I want to help conserve biodiversity in the Mekong River, especially endangered species such as giant catfish, giant sting ray and of course dolphins. I believe it is extremely important to keep them for the people who currently live in the world and the Cambodian people, and just as importantly, keep them for the next generation."



Vinn Bunna presenting environmental information to members of a village on the Mekong.



From left to right: Hy Somaly, Amy Maling and Riel Sena

New SWA team members - Text and photo by Chris Greenwood

WWF Cambodia's Srepok Wilderness Area (SWA) project welcomes two new members to its Community Extension Team (CET), Hy Somaly and Riel Sena. Somaly will be working with the CET team's southern cluster of villages while Sena will be working in the Northern cluster.

"I am very pleased to have more women in the CET team especially as the project moves towards working more closely with the female members of our target communities," said Amy Maling, Community Extension Team Leader.



Nick Cox (on the left) receives a certificate for his successful completion of WWF's Leaders Course from WWF-Cambodia Country Director, Seng Teak.

Farwell to Nick Cox - Text and photo by Chris Greenwood

Nick Cox, WWF Cambodia's stalwart Dry Forests Programme coordinator bid a fond farewell to staff in December as he headed off to take up his new position of Coordinator of the Lower Mekong Dry Forests Ecoregion based in Lao PDR.

Amongst the numerous gifts presented to Nick was a certificate which marked his successful completion of the WWF Leaders Course. In presenting the certificate, country director Seng Teak, said he hoped others would follow Nick's example in completing the course and in the process expanding their knowledge horizons.

Nick also encourage WWF Cambodian staff to consider enrolling in the WWF Leaders Course. He said though it had been hard work, it had also been enjoyable and very worthwhile, which coincidentally, was how he summed up his time working in the WWF Cambodian office. He thanked everyone for their assistance during his time here and looked forward to seeing them in Lao PDR.

for a living planet

Volunteer Activity

Volunteer diaries - continued

Text by Tom Goldthorpe and Rory Kettles



Tom (left), Rory (right)

As Rory and Tom move into their fourth month as volunteers with the Srepok Wilderness Area (SWA) project they

share more of their Cambodian experiences in the field. **For their first instalment, see our September issue.**

Rory

The last month has been the best time I have spent in Cambodia. Based at an outpost in the heart of the Monduliri Protected Forest (MPF) named Merouch, I have really had the opportunity to immerse myself in the lives and routines of the rangers based there.

The head ranger Lean Kha is a great person to work with. His knowledge of the forest is second to none. He has a terrific sense of humour and is well versed in traditional Khmer medicine - which can lead to unfortunate consequences when those to attributes collide.

I witnessed this first hand whilst on patrol. One night I awoke in my hammock feeling quite sick. I was vomiting and feeling rather unwell when Kha kindly offered to perform a traditional Khmer remedy. He laid a sheet on the ground and instructed me to lie down. In my state I was willing to try anything to alleviate my discomfort.

Little did I know what he had in mind. In front of a large audience he proceeded to spread a Khmer equivalent to 'Vick's vapour rub' on my body and then carve massive scratches into my chest and back with the lid of the Vaseline pot. It was excruciating!

Kha tried to lighten the mood and probably drown out my excessive profanities by pairing his new found medical role with his comedic talent. Through a slight tear in my eye, I watched Kha giggling and talking away, encouraged by seven or eight hysterical Cambodians.

I find my self thinking of home but realising that I really wouldn't want to be any other place than in the middle of the forest. Many a time on my lunchtime break whilst sitting in my hammock looking out to the river, I have thought that things can't get much better than this.

The rangers are among the friendliest people I've met in Cambodia and always make sure we are involved with whatever they are doing.

Merouch is a special place and I feel immensely lucky to have the opportunity to be a part of the outpost.

Tom

It's unbelievable to think yet another month of my gap year in Cambodia has gone past. The saying "time flies when you're having fun" is certainly proving to be true.

After a week in Sen Monorom, working on ideas for a forestry law awareness campaign, we were off on a seven hour hair raising truck ride to Merouch base, by the Srepok river, in the heart of the incredibly beautiful MPF.

With wonderful Khmer food, beautiful surroundings and welcoming people, it was

easy to settle into the camp. Then the work began. The first job was road clearing. With a team of seven Khmers, we cut new paths next to the river, building benches and clearing spaces to sit and look over the river every few kilometres. The work was hard in the blazing hot sun and proved to be thirsty work, this was okay for the Khmer staff who simply cut a piece of bamboo to use as a straw into the river whenever they were thirsty, Rory and I stuck to boiled water.

The next morning, we loaded our hammocks and clothes onto the elephant and headed off on a four day patrol into the forest.

It was an incredible experience. We cut new roads, found animal tracks and saw lots of wild monkeys, snakes, spiders and even a gaur, all in the magnificence of the surrounding forest.

My only disappointment was that upon returning to Merouch I began to feel ill. At the request of the Phnom Penh office I was evacuated back to Sen Monorom. Good job too - it turned out I had contracted malaria.

Back in Phnom Penh now for some R&R. As wonderful as the city is, I cannot wait to get back to Merouch.



Beautiful dry forest in the Monduliri Protected Forest in the dry season.

Editing and publishing

Communications Unit

Asnarith Tep

Chris Greenwood

Emails: asnarith.tep@wwfgreatermekong.org

chris.greenwood@wwfgreatermekong.org

© content 2006 WWF Greater Mekong

Cambodia Country Programme. All rights reserved.

#28, Street 9, Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

P.O. Box: 2467. Tel: +855 23 218 034, and fax: +855 23 211 909

Thank you to all contributors:

Andy Maxwell, Son Chansocheat (WCS), Martin von Kaschke, Tony Lynam, Jeff Delvart, Koy Ra, Thibault Ledecq, Lic Vuthy, Khou Eang Hour, Or Channy, Merrill Halley, Tom Goldthorpe and Rory Kettles.

for a living planet