

**SURVIVING
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BOKOR CONSERVATION PROJECT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cambodia continues to be menaced by poaching, encroachment and illegal logging. While the rangers are doing excellent work, they face constraints, which range from prevalence of malaria to rogue military and police officers treating sections of the park as their own private property. The park's boundaries are porous and difficult to monitor and threats to its integrity have emerged on all points of the compass. But, positive signs are emerging that the improved patrolling is paying dividends and rangers are wrested control of the park back from poachers and loggers.

In the north, a boundary dispute has arisen where soldiers from a military academy in the area have appropriated a large tract of parkland for military and agricultural use.

To the East of the park an ex-Khmer Rouge unit that was re-commissioned as a Royal Cambodian Army detachment after it surrendered is proving a serious threat to the rangers safety. The commander of this army unit is using his soldiers as a private army to illegally log and encroach on parkland.

In the West of the park a local village chief and his two deputies shot and killed an elephant. Prompt action by park staff in conjunction with the Mobile Wilderness Protection Unit led to their arrest on weapons charges and with killing a protected species.

The civilian police appear to be involved in illegal activities in the south and southeast and the park staff can do little to prevent them. Weapons, chainsaws and other equipment confiscated by the rangers have been returned to the police after high-ranking officers petitioned the park director for its return. Non-compliance

would have almost certainly have led to violence. These seem to be the actions of individual officers rather than reflecting official policy.

Illegal activities such as encroachment, wildlife poaching, logging and charcoal production seem to be on the rise despite active patrolling by the rangers. The increase in violations at this stage is probably the result of more effective enforcement and we hope to see a net decline the longer the project is in operation.

Most violators are impoverished local villagers hired as laborers by third parties to cut or carry wood. Although they have supplied information about middlemen, park officials are powerless to act as their jurisdiction is confined to the park boundaries.



There have also been reports of collusion between some government departments and traders to allow the traders to conduct illegal activities with impunity once 'taxes' have been levied on the collected natural resources.

Another emerging threat to Bokor is a proposed dam on the Touk Chou River that if built will flood the core of the park where the forest is still in pristine condition. A Canadian company is presently evaluating the Touk Chou valley as a potential site for the \$220 Million hydroelectric

facility. In WildAid's view, such a project would set a bad precedent and send the wrong message to conservation organizations working to save Cambodia's threatened natural resources. WildAid joined other NGO's to issue a letter of concern to the Canadian Embassy in Phnom Penh.

After a year's operation, the park staff are now able to more precisely identify poaching hotspots and can thus focus resources more effectively. New substations and more staff have mean't that more of the park is protected by regular patrolling. This year the rangers found and destroyed 7,274 snares, 144 charcoal kilns and confiscated 45 chainsaws.

PARK PROTECTION



Bokor Park Chief with confiscated skins

Prior the Bokor Conservation Project rangers lacked both the training and equipment to operate effectively.

As a result of the first ranger training organized by WildAid in December 2000 they are now beginning to wrest back control of the park from poachers and illegal loggers.

The 25 trained rangers are divided into five teams of five. Often two teams will operate together to saturate an area considered a poaching hotspot.

Equipment provided by WildAid to the BCP includes uniforms, maps, compasses, radios, global positioning systems (GPS), digital cameras, first aid kits and anti-malarial medicines. A salary and food supplement is also paid.

Summary of Activities

In **September** the rain affected the efficiency of the ranger patrols leading to illness and some restrictions in reporting.

A follow up to the previous month's meeting with the military in the north of the park was

held, at the Military Academy that borders the park at Prich Nhil. A disagreement over the park boundary means that the soldiers are encroaching inside the park and carrying on illegal logging, mostly for charcoal. Meetings between the Ministry of Environment and the military have not found a solution but the military has compromised by ordering its soldiers to cease activities that degrade the area any further until a more formal understanding can be reached.

Experienced rangers that completed last year's training course have been transferred to act as team leaders and mentors in the remoter substations. In September, a very experienced ranger from Touk Chhou was re-assigned to Prich Nhil and an immediate improvement in patrolling was noted.

Violations involving encroachment, poaching, logging and charcoal production continue to occur. Some of these cases still involve military or civil law enforcement agencies.

In **October** occasional heavy rainstorms continued to impede the ranger's work, but constant rotational patrolling continued to disrupt illegal activity. Four chainsaws were confiscated, 273 snares located and burnt and 2 poachers camps destroyed.



A pile of confiscated chainsaws



Charcoal for sale near Bokor National Park

A new office building at the park's main entrance sub-station was constructed from timber confiscated by rangers when they halted an illegal logging operation in September.

Improved weather in **November** allowed more effective patrolling, however malaria continued to take its toll on the rangers.

While conducting regular patrols along the park perimeter and into the core of the park from each of the sub-stations, the rangers were able to disrupt a significant number of illegal activities. During this month two chainsaws, wood and timber planks were confiscated. A number of poacher's camps, charcoal kilns and snares were also destroyed and several poachers apprehended in the forest with wildlife products in their possession.

A serious incident occurred on the Western side of the park when rangers at Mong Rhitty sub-station heard reports of an elephant being shot by a local village chief. Prompt action by the Department of Forestry and Wildlife (DFW) and military police (MP) from the Joint DFW-MP-WildAid Mobile Unit quickly saw the arrest of this poacher.

December marked the emergence of challenges specific to the dry season, namely fires being set by encroachers to

clear land for settlement and agriculture. The rangers presently have neither the equipment nor training to extinguish these fires. Some fires are also started accidentally when charcoal producers leave their kilns unattended. Violations involving charcoal production tend to increase during the dry season.

Illegal logging, poaching and encroachment continued to occur in significant numbers and some still involve the military and other authorities in the area. Threats of attack and security are still a concern in the north and in the Koh Sla area.

The health of the rangers still continues to affect the efficiency of patrols. As usual malaria is the biggest single problem, with as much as 10% of the rangers on sick leave at any one time. WildAid is raising funds to provide a nurse to treat the ranger's forest related illnesses.

Ranger Training

In October and November, Mark Bowman, a private security consultant hired by WildAid, conducted an on-the-job ranger training. During patrols he reviewed the efficiency of the patrolling tactics. Training took place in both real and staged situations. They were shown safe methods of moving through the forest and techniques for handling violators. They were also introduced to advance map reading. Mark's recommendations will further improve patrolling effectiveness.



Mark Bowman training rangers in the field

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



The park is surrounded by impoverished farmers

Many of the proposed Outreach activities for Bokor have been developed at the Khao Yai Conservation Project in Thailand where they have proved highly successful in the conservation of natural resources and changing attitudes of local communities towards the park.

These activities include youth camps, mobile educational teams visiting villages and schools and organizing alternative employment programs for reformed poachers. Once WildAid secures funding these outreach activities will begin.

During April 2001 WildAid's Ms. Krisana Kaewplang, the Outreach field coordinator for KYCP and Khmer speaker, conducted an Outreach Survey around Bokor National Park during which she looked at human demographics, community forest use and local attitudes towards the park and staff. Her report and its recommendations have been compiled into working proposals for a distinct Bokor Outreach program.

This component of the project still has to be put into operation and it is hoped during 2002 that funds will become available for this. A separate report concerning the social demographics and socio-economics in two sample areas, south and southeast of the park has generated a proposal detailing plans for community outreach, public awareness and alternative employment plans for reformed poachers.



WildAid's Krisana Kaewplang during outreach survey

WILDLIFE MONITORING



Setting up a camera trap on a game trail

WildAid and the Ministry of the Environment are monitoring several key species considered to be most at risk from poaching. Measuring the population trends of these animals will give an indication of the impact of more effective patrolling.

The fifty rangers at Bokor spend over half their time in the field but their numbers are inadequate to the task of monitoring the entire 1,400 km² of the park. Monitoring is currently being conducted on an ad-hoc basis by rangers on patrol and by placing camera traps on game trails.

Sightings of prey base species are regular. Sambar, muntjac and wild boar are still common in certain areas. Signs of tiger were noted several times in November and December and there was an anecdotal, but credible report from fishermen of a crocodile in the Touk Chou River.

New data based on track analysis suggests that the elephant population in the park, previously thought to be around a dozen, may be higher.



A magnificent tiger – ‘safe’ in Kampot Zoo

SPECIAL SECTION

Poaching, or a case of Elephant-Human conflict?

An incident involving the shooting of an elephant occurred on the 14th of November 2002 in Phum Svay, Sihanoukville province about five km outside of the park. Investigations led to the arrests of a village chief and his two deputies.

The arrested men attempted to justify the killing of this elephant (and shooting at two others which entered the park), on the grounds that the elephants ate some crops and destroyed a house. On inspection, however it was ascertained that the damage, if it was indeed caused by an

Three Arrested in Elephant Shooting Case

BY VAN ROEUN
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Three village officials have been apprehended in connection with the killing of a wild elephant in Bokor National Park, officials said.

The trio, officials from Svay village in Prey Nup district, Sihanoukville, have been behind bars in Sihanoukville since Saturday, pending trial on charges they slaughtered the elephant, officials said. They were also charged with illegal gun possession.

Eng Peo Tith, head of the Military Police task force for wildlife offenses, identified them as Sem Ren, 55, Svay village chief, and his two deputy chiefs, Nhem Nhel, 46, and Say Chhoeun, 42.

Chey Yuthearith, director of Bokor National Park, said the elephant was killed Nov 14 in Svay village while it was foraging for food. After the elephant was killed, Bokor park rangers investigated and discovered that local officials were involved, Chey Yuthearith said.

Eng Peo Tith said Tuesday the task force arrested the three poachers Nov 17 after evidence relating to the elephant's death was found. The force confiscated three assault rifles as well as remnants of the elephant's head and a piece of its hide, he said.

The poachers fired two shots at two elephants late in the evening of Nov 13, but the elephants escaped unharmed. The next

morning, the elephants returned to scrounge for food, Eng Peo Tith said.

Seeing the elephants, Say Chhoeun then fired three shots at them. His fellow villager Chheng Lonh snatched the gun and fired three more shots. One of the elephants was killed, but the other escaped. Authorities are still looking for Chheng Lonh. The other three men have confessed, Eng Peo Tith said.

Poaching is a persistent problem in Bokor National Park. Bulldozed roads have made about 80 percent of the 140,000-hectare park accessible to loggers and poachers, according to a study funded by the European Commission.

21-11-01 Cambodia

elephant, was minor. Department of Forestry and Wildlife officials also reported that the elephant tracks next to the house appeared to be man-made.

Further evidence that this was a case of poaching was the fact the commune chief threatened to kill anyone who reported them to the authorities and sold the meat and skin and attempted to burn or bury the remains.



These elephants were probably moving from a forested area in Sre Ambel southwest of Bokor, but not in a protected area. Regular reports have been received of elephant migrations in this area due to seasonal changes and disturbance from logging concessions.



A number of conservation organizations have proposed revoking certain logging concessions to form a safe corridor from one forest area to another. The Cambodian Prime Minister is currently considering this proposal.

DATA SHEET

Bokor National Park



View from the summit of the escarpment

The Preah Monivong 'Bokor' National Park was established by Royal decree in 1993. It is one of 23 protected areas in Cambodia. With an area of 1,400 square kilometers spanning four southern provinces, it contains a unique range of habitats and supports a rich diversity of flora and fauna.

Topography: Located in the south of the Cardamom-Elephant mountain range, the park is hilly in the north and east with a plateau and escarpment in the west and southwest. Altitude ranges from 10m to 1079m above sea level. The soil is generally uplifted Mesozoic sandstone, which is unfertile with little agricultural potential. It contains the catchment area for one major river, the Touk Chou.

Climate: Tropical monsoon with two distinct seasons; dry and hot from November to May and cool with heavy rainstorms from

May to October. There are frequent winds and an annual rainfall of 1,813mm. Temperatures on the plateau are 6-10 degrees cooler than the coast ranging from a low 10°C in July to a mean of 21°C the rest of the year.

Vegetation: A wide range of forest types including dry dipterocarp, lowland evergreen and mixed deciduous in the north. Rich in endemics (plants unique to Bokor), its fens and bogs are an unusual feature.

Biodiversity: The presence of large mammals like elephant, tiger, leopard, bear, sambar, gaur and binturong has been confirmed in addition to an important population of pileated gibbon. Over 300 bird species are expected to be present. The globally threatened green peafowl and the chestnut headed partridge have been sighted as have the blue-eared kingfisher, crow-billed drongo, refocus-winged buzzard and three species of hornbill.

Eleven species of amphibians have been noted in addition to a variety of reptiles.

Bokor Town: The well-preserved ruins of a hill station dating from the French colonial period sit atop the escarpment with impressive sea views over the Gulf of Thailand and Vietnam. The Ranger Training Center is also located here.

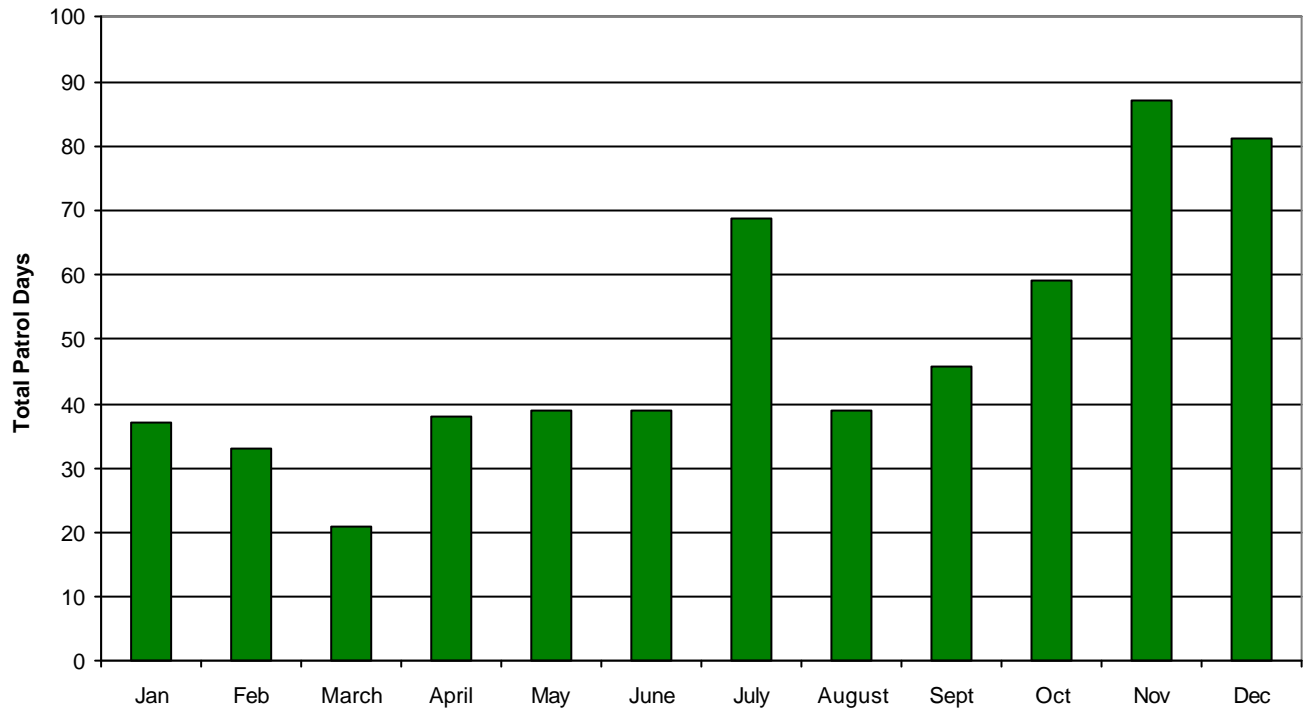


Ruins of the Casino in Bokor National Park

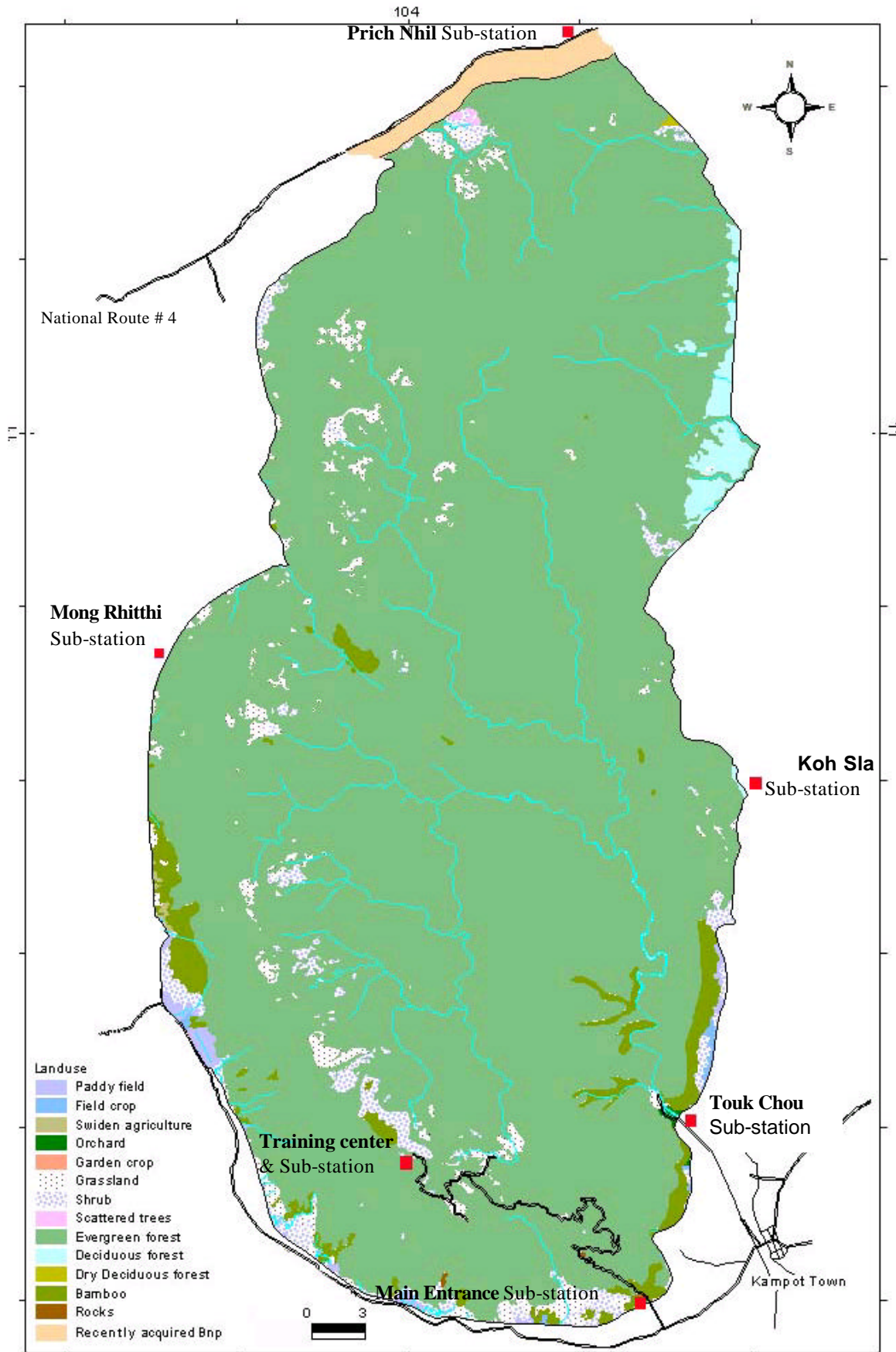
Bokor Confiscation Data

Confiscated / Activity	Total	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Snares	7,274	2,486	718	240	30	380	488	100	1,157	708	273	222	472
Non re-offense contracts signed with poachers	258	6	17		25	32	24	31	5	16	19	12	71
Cut Wood	179			7		104+.4m ³	113		17	7.6m ³	41		1
Charcoal Kilns	144	2	2	21		14	10		14	14	7	3	57
Intruders lectured	138		26					11		16	5		80
Intruders interviewed	73							26	22				25
Aloe-wood collectors stopped	68			4					15	2	7	24	16
Axes	63	6		4	2	2	2		2	4	7	20	14
Detained	51				21	8		10		2			10
Chainsaw	45	8	3		4	6	4	5	1	3	4	2	5
Knives	30							4		6	1	11	8
Dead animals confiscated	27					1		4	5	5		9	3
Poachers Camps	21	1	2		1		3		4	2	2	3	3
Live animals conf & released	21					7	4	1	5	2			2
Stopped encroachment	17				2				2	12			1
Poles	13			3	2 carts								10
Chisels	11			4								Many	7
Aloe-wood confiscated	11			10								1	
Torch / Battery	8							1	2			1	4
Trucks confis	7					2		5					
Guns	5					4				1			
Fire extinguished	5				1							1	3
Saws	4						1						3
Electric fishing gear	3						3						
Court eviction of encroacher	3		3										
Radio confiscated	1									1			
Hunting/guard dog destroyed	1	1											

Bokor Patrolling Days



Bokor National Park, Cambodia



BCP Mission Statement

The Challenge

- To disrupt and prevent the activities of commercial loggers and poachers
- To accurately measure the health of wildlife populations and illegal activities within the park
- To conserve wild habitat when it is exploited for subsistence by impoverished rural communities.



The Goals

- To sustain the biodiversity of Bokor and aid the recovery of its wild animal populations
- To encourage the sensible development of ecotourism activities in the park to alleviate.
- To develop the Bokor Ranger Training Center into a National Park Protection Academy.



The Strategy

- Train and equip specialized ranger teams to conduct constant, rotational patrols
- Establish a professional management system to coordinate the tasks of protecting the park.
- Discourage local farmers from poaching through a community outreach program



Bokor Ranger Training Center

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Cambodian Ministry of the Environment Department of Nature Conservation and Protection (MOE/DNCP) have assigned a counterpart Mr. Meng Monyrak, vice-chief of the DNCP Protected Areas Office, to work with WildAid. Monyrak is responsible for monitoring and reporting the progress of Bokor Conservation Project (BCP).

Mr. Meng Monyrak offers management advice, writes regular summaries in Khmer and English about the problems and progress experienced by BNP staff during the previous month, including a short list of recommendations for future action. He distributes this monthly report to the MOE/DNCP, the Bokor Park Director, WildAid, the Forest Crime Monitoring Unit and the Kampot Provincial Ministry of Environment Office.

WildAid monitors the project from their Bangkok office. Mr. Tim Redford a WildAid coordinator visits the park 6 times a year to review BCP activities and audit expenditures.

Project operating funds are made available on a monthly basis after receipt of the previous months accounts. The accounts are compiled by the counterpart and then emailed to WildAid.

The Park Director administers local payments except for salary and food supplements which are distributed by the MOE counterpart. These are disbursed directly to ensure they are received promptly and go directly to the intended recipient. During this visit the Park Deputy Director and the counterpart compile a monthly progress report.

The patrolling strategy is planned on a three-month basis between the park Director and Chief of the Protected Areas Office using methods WildAid introduced in the December 2000 training course. The strategy is modified according to local news, information, results and conditions.

Periodic informal refresher trainings are conducted in-situ when WildAid representatives visit the park. Regular telephone contact is maintained between WildAid, the MOE counterpart and Park Director.

This system of monitoring the project has proved successful. Financial support guarantees that the park can reduce poaching and on-going training means the rangers are able to use up-to-date methods to assist them in their work. The reporting process has demonstrated to the Protected Areas Office how regular reporting can improve data collection, planning and management strategy.

Information collected by the rangers is entered into a GIS database, which is used to help evaluate and modify patrolling methods. This enables park officials to formulate strategies to optimize best use of human resources.

By January 2002, WildAid and its MOE counterpart will evaluate the progress and any problems of the project to date in a memo to the MOE and in a report to funding organizations. The memo/report will also include a list of recommendations. WildAid estimates that it will take the first full year for Bokor rangers to feel comfortable running the new system, and that by the second year the Bokor Conservation Project will become an increasingly effective and mature operation.



WildAid's Tim Redford at a BCP meeting

