

News

Cambodia's first large-scale marine protected area declared in the Koh Rong Archipelago

Cambodia achieved a landmark for national marine conservation on 16th June 2016 when the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries signed a Prakas declaring a 405 km² Marine Fisheries Management Area (MFMA) around the islands of Koh Rong and Koh Rong Sanloem, the country's first large-scale marine protected area.

This internationally-recognised marine protected area will promote sustainable fishing through government leadership and community-driven action. The Cambodian Fisheries Administration and conservation organisations including Fauna & Flora International and the Song Saa Foundation have worked within the archipelago for over five years to develop the protected area, consulting with local stakeholders and communities and gathering baseline socioeconomic and biological data to support the designation of different zones inside the MFMA.

These zones will ensure that the MFMA supports both people and biodiversity by protecting important and vulnerable habitats (such as nursery and breeding sites), while also allowing for activities such as research, education, sustainable fishing and responsible tourism in other zones. This means that the protected area can sustain vital fisheries while protecting habitats, promoting ecotourism and reducing poverty.

The MFMA is situated approximately 20 km off the coast of Sihanoukville and is home to coral reef, seagrass and mangrove habitats, which support many charismatic species including sea turtles and seahorses. Three Community Fisheries located across the Prek Svay, Daem Thkov, Koh Touch, M'Pai Bai and Sok San villages are represented by locally-elected teams of fishermen who patrol and protect their fishing waters, keeping watch over the MFMA zones and representing their communities at local and national meetings.

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Capacity building conference for conservation in Asia

Conservation organisations in Asia face a growing diversity of serious environmental issues. Long-term solutions to these problems will require actions by organisations, individuals and communities with the capacity to undertake a range of technical and process-based activities.

The third in a series of four international conferences on capacity building for conservation will be hosted by Pune University, India from 18 to 21 March 2017. The meeting is being organised by Ecological Research & Training Ltd. (UK), the Indian Herpetological Society and Pune University, and will provide a pan-Asian opportunity to review existing capacity initiatives, exchange ideas, develop and enhance networks, and formulate effective solutions to common capacity issues.

The conference has been designed to promote innovative and creative thinking around key issues and to draw on the experience and participation of conference attendees. Five thematic sessions will be led by Asian organisations and begin with invited talks, followed by facilitated workshops with specific tasks. The invited talks will act as demonstration projects to identify core issues, barriers, problems and potential solutions. This will be achieved through structured and facilitated group discussions. The thematic sessions will include:

- Developing and maintaining taxonomic skills in Asia
- Conservation science: building capacity to really use our species and habitat data for conservation action
- Learning from leaders: lessons in achieving organisational goals from five Asian conservation leaders
- Is it working: how can we evaluate the impact of our capacity building efforts?
- Developing a community of practice in Asia

One day of the meeting has also been set-aside to provide conference delegates with a wide range of free training events. Further information and registration forms can be found at the conference website (www.ert-conservation.co.uk/asia_capacity_intro.php).

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