

News

Workshop discusses vision for management of migratory fish in Cambodia

Despite the importance of migratory fish to Cambodian food security and livelihoods, no clear vision currently exists to manage and conserve these species across their diverse habitats throughout their life cycles. To help address this gap, the Wonders of the Mekong project held a workshop entitled “Needs, techniques, and risk assessment: toward a vision for migratory fish in Cambodia” in Phnom Penh on 17–18 October 2018. The workshop was organized by FISHBIO, hosted by the Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute, Cambodia and the University of Nevada, Reno, and funded by USAID.

The workshop brought together over 65 participants from Cambodia and the Mekong Basin, as well as international speakers. The goal of the event was to identify high-priority data needs regarding fish migration in the Mekong Basin, develop a shared vision for management and conservation of migratory fish in Cambodia, and to discuss tools that can be used to achieve this vision. Presentations and group discussions identified key data needs such as identification of important habitats and spawning areas, migration routes and timing, and species’ life cycles, among others.

Speakers at the event presented a variety of tools and techniques for studying migratory fish which ranged from telemetry and sonar cameras to otolith microchemistry and genetic work, as well as local ecological knowledge of fishers. Themes that emerged during discussions on developing a vision for migratory fish included maintenance of abundant fish populations that can sustain themselves, migrate freely and support local food security. Good governance and enforcement were viewed as necessary to address threats and illegal fishing, as were conservation measures to protect fish habitats and raise awareness about sustainable fishing practices. The Wonders of the Mekong project will continue to develop this vision for management and conservation of migratory fish. A workshop report and policy brief are available at www.mekongfishnetwork.org/vision-migratory-fish-cambodia/

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International workshop for Eld’s deer conservation in Phnom Penh, 2018

Eld’s deer *Rucervus eldii* is a globally Endangered species in need of immediate conservation action across its range to prevent extinction of its geographically distinct subspecies. Conservationists from Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand met in November for a workshop hosted by Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden and BirdLife International Cambodia Programme in Phnom Penh. The objectives of the event were to share expertise and lessons learned, to develop regional conservation strategies for the species, and to promote the maintenance of genetic diversity of populations through translocation or exchange. The meeting also hoped to raise momentum and support for Eld’s deer conservation.

The meeting comprised two days of indoor sessions and a half-day visit to Phnom Tamao Zoo and Wildlife Rescue Centre. The agenda included status reviews for each of the range countries and case studies regarding in-situ conservation, captive management, genetic studies and ecology. Roundtable panel discussions with leading practitioners and group and plenary discussions on specific conservation strategies were also held.

Eld’s deer was once widely distributed across lowland dry forests in tropical Southeast Asia. Of the three subspecies currently recognized, *R. e. eldii* has been reduced to a single site in India. Numbers of *R. e. thamin* in Myanmar and Thailand comprise perhaps 3,000 individuals centred on two protected areas in Myanmar. Thailand has reintroduced this subspecies. Small, scattered populations of *R. e. siamensis* occur in protected areas in Cambodia and Laos which are vulnerable to hunting and habitat loss. Re-introduction of the *siamensis* subspecies is underway in Thailand. Recent research indicates that the semi-wild population in Hainan (China) is genetically distinct and warrants appropriate conservation efforts.

Delegates at the meeting collectively expressed a desire to form an Eld’s deer working group under the IUCN Deer Specialist Group and agreed to identify national country coordinators to facilitate effective communication and international collaborations.

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