

Conservation news

Camera trapping in the Cardamom Mountain Landscape, Cambodia, reveals Asian elephant calves with severe injuries from wire snares

The Cardamom Mountain Landscape in south-west Cambodia comprises c. 2 million ha of tropical forest and is the only contiguous area in Indochina sufficiently large (> 4,400 km²) for the long-term viability of Asian elephants (Hedges, 2008, *Report to USFWS*). Since 1999 Fauna & Flora International (FFI) has been working with the Cambodian Government to recover this globally important elephant population. Part of FFI's conservation efforts include population monitoring using camera traps. Beginning in December 2016 we set 51 camera traps to monitor the core elephant population of c. 45 individuals within the Tatai Wildlife Sanctuary and Southern Cardamom National Park in the southern Cardamom Mountain Landscape, and an additional seven camera traps in Kirrirom National Park, to monitor a small subpopulation in the far south-east of this Landscape.

We obtained photographs and videos of 15 different groups of elephants in the core area, of 2–9 individuals, and of another group of six individuals in the Kirrirom subpopulation. We identified seven individual calves (< 1 year old), of which four had severe leg injuries from what appeared to be wire snares around the base of their legs. Additionally, our camera traps showed two adult and one subadult male elephants with trunk injuries and lacerations that appeared to have been caused by snares. In September 2017 local villagers found a carcass of an elephant calf that reportedly died from a snare wound. A calf in Moldulkiri province in eastern Cambodia died in July 2016 of an infection from a snare wound similar to those observed in our camera-trap videos.

We are concerned that wire snares could be causing unnaturally high calf mortality, jeopardizing the recovery of this critically important elephant population. These wire snares were not set for elephants but for capturing wildlife (e.g. the sambar *Cervus unicolor*, wild pig *Sus scrofa*, red muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*, and the bears *Ursus malayanus* and *Ursus thibetanus*) for the illegal bushmeat market. There are ongoing efforts to remove snares. In 2015 > 27,000 snares were removed from the Southern Cardamom National Park, yet snaring appears to be increasing (Gray et al., 2018, *Biodiversity Conservation*, 27, 1031–1037)—another example of the pervasive threat that the bushmeat trade poses to wildlife.

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19th International Conservation Forum for Arabia's Biodiversity

The 19th Annual Sharjah International Conservation Forum for Arabia's Biodiversity was held at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, during 5–8 February 2018. This forum brought together over 200 participants from Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Iraq, and also from the UK, South Africa, Australia, the USA and New Zealand. The Sharjah workshops are hosted by the Environment and Protected Areas Authority of the Government of Sharjah, under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah.

The 19th meeting had four themes. A species assessment theme conducted an IUCN Red List assessment of the endemic plants of the Arabian region. The protected areas theme applied the new IUCN Key Biodiversity Area standard to selected taxa and sites across the Arabian Peninsula. The veterinary theme looked at clinical diagnostics and immunology in zoo and wild animals. A technical session looked at the application of drones in ecological monitoring and conservation management in the United Arab Emirates.

Working groups conducted an IUCN Red List assessment of endemic plants of the Arabian region. In total 375 species were assessed, 21% of which were found to be threatened, including 30 Critically Endangered species. This marked completion of the first comprehensive assessment of the status of all endemic plants in the region.

Taxonomic and regional working groups applied the Key Biodiversity Area Standard (IUCN, 2016, *A Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas, Version 1.0*) to 37 species of threatened Arabian plants and animals, including six species of mammal, seven bird species, 11 reptiles, one amphibian and 13 aloes. Delegates delineated Key Biodiversity Areas for selected taxa and evaluated overlap between existing protected area networks and designated Important Bird Areas. The development of regional criteria for Key Biodiversity Areas was also discussed.

The veterinary theme focused on haematology, clinical chemistry, urinalysis, clinical immunology, neonatal immunology, vaccination and diagnostic testing, and the identification of disease using blood smears. Lectures introducing the