

# New populations of Indochina's rarest deer discovered in Cambodia

November 8 2013, by Ally Catterick

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Hog deer fawn found at AnDoung Tuk during surveys. Credit: Jeremy Holden/FFI

A joint team from the Royal University of Phnom Penh's Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (CBC) and Fauna & Flora International (FFI) have found three previously unknown populations of the Endangered hog deer in Cambodia.

The hog deer, today listed as Endangered on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, once ranged throughout large areas of South and mainland Southeast Asia, but has suffered regional population decimations due to hunting, habitat loss and degradation. Cambodia is home to the only known wild populations of the *Axis porcinus annamiticus* subspecies of the deer.

A field team, funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, conducted interview surveys in local villages, following up on hog deer reports with rapid field surveys looking for tracks or dung.

Ten potential areas of habitat were identified, with surveys confirming hog deer populations in five. Sarah Brook, Species Manager for Fauna & Flora International, Cambodia said, "This is a remarkable discovery given not only the [species](#)' vulnerability to hunting, but also because all of the sites were outside the existing protected area system."

The hog deer is the predominant large mammal of today's Mekong floodplains wet grasslands. It's an important species to conserve in its own right but also a tiger prey species. Sarah continued, "Given the recent interest in reintroducing tigers back into landscapes in Indochina, there's an opportunity for this to go hand in hand with the protection and reintroduction of the hog deer."



CBC and FFI have carried out the first surveys on the Endangered hog deer in five years. Credit: Jeremy Holden/FFI

Prior to this survey, Indochinese hog deer had been found at only two locations in Cambodia since the 1980s – north of Kratie and near BotumSakor National Park in southwest Cambodia. Hog deer were rediscovered near Kratie in 2006 following reports from local villagers, later confirmed by camera-trapping surveys, and preliminary surveys estimated 50-80 individuals in the area.

No conservation actions have been undertaken since the discovery of the species near Botum Sakor National Park in 2008. "Based on this year's surveys, it is clear that very few individuals or small groups remain at several sites. The two sites with more hog deer are small and under increasing pressure from agricultural encroachment and hunting has been

reported at all of the sites. Clearly, time is running out to try to conserve this deer and its fast disappearing habitat," Sarah said.

Hog deer are very easy to hunt and their preference for grassland floodplain habitats usually ensures they occur in very close proximity to human settlements. At one of the survey sites a hog deer fawn was found hiding in the grass, which is in part encouraging, but also highlights the ease with which they are able to be captured and hunted.

Provided by Fauna & Flora International

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