

# Cambodia border crossing and road threaten one of Asia's last great wilderness areas

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The critically endangered giant ibis is the national bird of Cambodia. Credit: Fletcher & Baylis

Some of the world's most endangered species will be driven closer to extinction if a new road and border crossing with Vietnam are built

within Cambodia's pristine Mondulkiri Protected Forest – one of the most biologically diverse areas in Southeast Asia.

In advance of Endangered Species Day this Friday, WWF is calling for the border crossing to be cancelled to protect the 23 species of Endangered or Critically Endangered mammals, birds, reptiles and trees that live in the 4,300 km<sup>2</sup> Mondulkiri Protected Forest.

"Mondulkiri Protected Forest is a treasure trove of biodiversity and has been identified by the Cambodian Government as the site of a planned tiger reintroduction," said Sam Ath Chhith, Country Director, WWF-Cambodia. "Unfortunately, both the spectacular biodiversity and the tiger reintroduction are in jeopardy if this border crossing and [road](#) are built within the core zone of the protected forest."

Many of Mondulkiri's endangered species have already disappeared from other parts of Southeast Asia due to habitat loss and poaching for illegal wildlife products. The proposed new border crossing and road in eastern Cambodia will further fragment their dwindling habitat while providing little economic benefit.

"Improved infrastructure is critical to development but each project needs to be carefully evaluated because a poorly-planned road, like this one through Mondulkiri, can have a devastating impact on wildlife and people," said Carlos Drews, WWF Director Global Species Programme. "Along with sheltering so many threatened species, these forests support the livelihoods of local communities as well as providing ecosystem services, such as clean water and air, for people across Cambodia."



Wild tiger photographed by camera-trap inside the Mondulkiri Protected Forest. Over 160 camera-traps are deployed across the protected landscape to monitor tigers and other wild animals. Credit: FA / WWF-Cambodia

One of the most endangered species in Mondulkiri is the banteng. A species of wild cattle that was previously widespread from India to Indonesia, the banteng has declined by more than 80 per cent in the past 50 years and is now restricted to small populations in Cambodia, Java and Borneo. Over 5,000 banteng are estimated to live in the area, so it is critical for their survival.

Other [endangered species](#) in Mondulkiri include the Siamese crocodile, slender-billed vulture, elongated tortoise and giant ibis, which is the

national bird of Cambodia. The future of all these [species](#) would be undermined by the proposed infrastructure – as would plans to bring back tigers one day.

"The key to ensuring a successful tiger reintroduction is to keep the landscape as intact and unfragmented as possible, which means no border crossing and no road," said Dr Tom Gray, Manager of Species Conservation for WWF Greater Mekong.



Siamese crocodile. Credit: FA / WWF



Banteng herd at a waterhole in Mondulkiri Protected Forest in Cambodia. Mondulkiri Protected Forest is a biodiversity hotspot. Credit: Fletcher & Baylis/WWF-Greater Mekong

Provided by WWF

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