

**Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Cambodia Program**

JOB DESCRIPTION

Name :

Position : Community Engagment Officer

Project : Koh Kong and Mekong (Kratie and Stung Treng)

Duty station : Koh Kong (70%), Mekong (20%) and Phnom Penh (10%)

Report to : Som Sitha, Landscape Technical Advisor

BACKGROUND:

WCS reptile conservation project focuses on two critically endangered species of freshwater turtles.

The Southern River terrapin: the speices, also known as Royal Turtle, *Batagur affinis*, is one of the 25 world's most endangered tortoises and freshwater turtles. It is now restricted to small parts of Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Sumatra, and likely extirpated from Vietnam and Singapore. The subspecies found in Cambodia *B. a. edwardmollii* is Cambodia's national reptile, known locally as the "Royal Turtle". The turtle is now restricted to a small area in Sre Ambel District, Southwest Cambodia, where only a few nests are located each year. WCS has been working with the Fisheries Administration to conserve *Batagur affinis*, in Sre Ambel since 2001. The Sre Ambel *Batagur affinis* conservation project has in-situ and ex-situ components. In 2015 the focus of the project was expanded to include conservation of the Critically Endangered Siamese crocodile and other threatened turtle species with the addition of a project on the Mekong that aims to conserve the Endangered Cantor's Giant Softshell *Pelochelys cantorii*.

In-situ conservation of *Batagur affinis* and *Pelochelys cantorii* includes patrolling key rivers, finding and protecting turtle nests, and post-release monitoring. Post-release monitoring of radio-tagged *Batagur affinis* is by static receivers placed in the river, and by active searching for tagged individuals, which must be done over at least ten days each month (each active monitoring session must involve five continuous days of data collection).

The ex-situ conservation of *Batagur affinis* involves the upgrade of a head-starting facility, and overseeing the staff that run the facility. Hatchlings from all turtle nests are collected on hatching and transferred to the center. They are all micro-chipped and growth rates are monitored monthly. When ready for release the turtles are radio-tagged. The staff of the head-starting facility are responsible for growing food for the turtles, feeding the turtles and ensuring that a general high standard of cleanliness is maintained.

The Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle, also known as Asian Giant Softshell Turtle- *Pelochelys cantorii* is listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List and Endangered in Cambodian Fisheries Red List. Its status is in part due to life-history characteristics of low annual reproductive output, high mortality rate of eggs and juveniles, a lengthy period to reach maturity (taking typically over a decade), and a reproductive lifespan of several decades. Populations are most severely threatened by rapidly increasing human populations and rural development accompanied by a similarly rapid loss or degradation of forest and wetland habitat, as well as unsustainable levels of exploitation for use as food and traditional medicines.

Some of the few remaining breeding populations and nest beaches left for this species were rediscovered along the Mekong in 2007 by Conservation International (CI) and World Wide Fund, extending North from

Cambodia to the Laos border. CI began protecting these populations shortly thereafter, starting a head starting program which incubate and releases around 10% of the eggs discovered to reduce turtle mortality when they are most vulnerable to predation and other threats. In conjunction with these activities, CI also began implementing nest protection payments, patrols and community education campaigns.

WCS will seeks to examine the sustainability of the community incentives payment and strengthen the current payment scheme and adjust it whenever applicable to ensure long-term success of nest protection program and that local nest protectors as well as local villagers are satisfied with the project. This is to avoid any jealousy among people. It is WCS stand that without local and general public understanding, conservation efforts will be a challenge to achieve conservation goal. Therefore, we will raise awareness among local people and the public on the importance of *P. cantorri* and encourage them to participate in the conservation.

PURPOSE OF POSITION:

This position will lead the community fisheries livelihood project based in Sre Ambel and coordinating the livelihood project based in Mekong River with Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT).

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Lead the livelihood project in Sre Ambel River system
- Develop training manual on aquaculture
- Provide technical training to farmers on aquaculture and husbandry techniques to determine the best way to raise and keep fish,
- provide technical training on broodstock selection, food selection, water quality
- Assist with culture pond layout and construction
- Train selected farmers on all above supports and techniques
- Assist with fish production management, market assessment, and value chain
- Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the fish pond and success of the project
- Test and check on water quality of each pond
- Provide technical supports to CRDT on livelihood improvement along the Mekong River (reporting, meeting minutes, improved workplan, recommendation)
- Lead and coordinate on the conservation agreements and community management plans at both sites
- Lead and provide technical advice to FiA counterparts on the establishment of Community Fisheries along the Sre Ambel River system
- Write progress and donor reports
- Maintain good coordination with government agencies and stakeholders
- Assist with any given tasks as required by supervisor

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE:

- Bachelor's degree in aquaculture, fisheries, agriculture, rural development, environmental management, natural resource management or a related field
- Minimum two-year experience working in aquaculture development, livelihood, animal husbandry, community development for a non-profit organization
- Strong facilitation, presentation, and coordination skills, and a good understanding of fisheries management, wildlife conservation, rural context and rural communities
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, and ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Good in English (especially reading and writing), fluency in Khmer
- Good analytical/problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Good Computer skills (MS Words, Excel and PowerPoint)

ABILITY

- Spending long periods of time in remote locations
- Living and staying with communities
- Work overtime when required
- Working on own initiative with minimum supervision and staying on tasks
- Travelling by boat and motorbike
- Work in close collaboration with government agencies such as Fisheries Administration
- Maintain excellent communication with and encourage strong participation of local staff
- Liaise with donors, partners, the private sector, and international and local NGOs as required