

germaini), **Hog Deer** (*Axis porcinus*), **Dhole** (*Cuon alpinus*), **Fishing Cat** (*Prionailurus viverrinus*), **Asian Elephant** (*Elephas maximus*), and **Pileated Gibbon** (*Hylobates pileatus*).^{[4][5]} Local **poachers** affirm,^[citation needed] that the **Pileated gibbons** here forms a considerable population and it has been speculated, that the national park might in fact contain as much as 10% of the global population.^{[6][7]} Recent camera-trap evidence suggests, that the area is also home to the **critically endangered Indochinese tiger**.^[citation needed]

Many other **threatened** species have their home in Botum Sakor National Park, in fact over a quarter of the mammalian species here are of conservation interest due to their global status.^[8] These include large-toothed ferret badger (**Melogale personata**), **hairy-nosed otter** (*Lutra sumatrana*), **smooth-coated otter** (*Lutra perspicillata*), **Sambar deer**, **Large-spotted civet** and more.^[2] There is a possibility that **sun bear** and **moon bear** might be present as well.^[9]

Amphibians and reptiles [edit]

Surprisingly only a relatively small number of amphibian species have been found on the premisses of the national park. The area was expected to hold a large number of species, since the Cardamom Mountains are home to many and there are a broader variety of **ecosystems** to be found in Botum Sakor, compared to the mountains. Many of the amphibians found in the park, are of great importance nonetheless. Both the Mortensen's frog (**Rana mortenseni**) and Spine-Glanded Mountain Frog (**Paa fasciculispina**) are **endemic** to the south west of Cambodia and the Thailand-owned section of the Cardamom mountain range and there are two threatened species of turtle and one species of tortoise living here.

Most of the many reptiles of Botum Sakor are snakes, including charismatic species such as the **king cobra** and the **Malay pit viper**. Snakes are regularly seen, and subsequently hacked to death by local residents, at local plantations. There is also a known small population of **Siamese crocodiles** in some of the parks creeks. Cambodia in fact retains the worlds largest population of this critically endangered species, which was recently (2007) thought to be extinct even. The larger **saltwater crocodile** (*Crocodylus porosus*) is also here, and although it is of **least concern** from a global conservational viewpoint, they are threatened in South-east Asia. In Cambodia, saltwater crocodiles are thought to be restricted to Koh Kong Province.^[2]

Birds [edit]

There are several hundred species of birds to be found within the park area, but only preliminary research has been carried out so far. Of particular interest to conservationists is the **white-winged duck** (*Cairina scutulata*), which is endangered and one of the rarest **waterfowl** in Asia. There are a number of other threatened or near-threatened birds here too, like **green peafowl** (*Pavo muticus*), **lesser adjutant** (*Leptoptilos javanicus*), **oriental darter** (*Anhinga melanogaster*), **great hornbill** (*Buceros bicornis*) and **grey-headed fish eagle** (*Icthyophaga ictyaetus*).^[2]

Insects [edit]

The research on the **Lepidopterans** (butterflies and moths) in Botum Sakor, is also preliminary and at the same time unique for the country as a whole, since very little research on this group have been published on Cambodia at all. As of 2009, 147 species of lepidoterans have been recorded in the park, with as many as 49 species in the **Nymphalidae** family alone. Almost all the Lepidoteran species (and individuals) were found in the dense forests or the **swamp forests**, with very few in the open areas of **meadow** and river edge habitats. Apart from the Nymphalidae, a larger number of species of the **Satyridae** family has also been registered in the swampy forest habitats; a mean of 38 species per habitat area.^[2] The most common species in the park overall, seems to be the **common evening brown butterfly** (*Melanitis leda*: Satyridae). Due to the lack of identification literature on butterflies and moths in Cambodia, a number of unidentifiable species have been caught during research projects.^[8]

Understanding the distribution and development of the butterflies and moths are important in understanding and managing the national parks, as they are good **indicator species** of the environment. The relatively high percentage of Nymphalidae species in Botum Sakor, are in addition to other factors reflecting that the habitats are indeed disturbed by excessive clear cutting and logging.^[10]

Threats and concerns [edit]

Disturbance of Botum Sakor National Park is extremely high. In the years 1997 - 2002, an estimated 229 km² of evergreen forest was lost through **illegal logging** (~30 km²/year).² These initial crimes and large scale destructive activities, was eventually halted at the beginning of the new millennium, but the national park is now facing an increasing threat of destruction under the pretext of so-called development¹ at both local, national and international levels.^[11]

Agriculture, industry and construction projects [edit]

After establishing the Botum Sakor National Park in 1993, the Government of Cambodia apparently decided, that a large part of the land should be used for various agro-industrial and construction projects. A series of Economic Land Concessions has been issued and signed in recent years. How land is exploited, sold and leased in Cambodia is notoriously murky,^[12] but below is a list of well documented projects in relation to the park:

In November 1998, a [concession agreement](#) was signed with the Chinese company The Green Rich Co., Ltd. to plant, grow and harvest [oil palms](#), fruit trees and [acacia](#) in a 60,200 ha (602 km²) area. More than 80% of the land is located within Botum Sakor National Park in the north-east and constitutes roughly 40% of the [Koh Kong Districts](#) contribution to the national park. The project was initially scheduled to be carried out in 6 stages, converting 10,000 ha of the national park to [plantations](#) in each stage, but disputes with the Cambodian Ministry of Environment arose.^[13]

In April 2008, a concession agreement lasting 99 years was signed with the company Union Development Group Co.,Ltd. with the purpose of developing an area of 36,000 ha (360 km²) for tourism. The land is located within both [Kiri Sakor District](#) and [Botum Sakor District](#), but it is unknown what this project will include.^[14]

In August 2009, a concession agreement was signed with Koh Kong sez Co.,Ltd., to initiate a large scale agro-industrial project in a 9,977 ha (99.77 km²) area. The land is located within the [Kiri Sakor District](#).^[15]

In April 2010, a concession agreement lasting 90 years was signed with the Cambodian company L.Y.P Group Co., Ltd. to construct [Tapioca plantations](#) in a 4,097 ha (40.97 km²) area. The land is located in the upper-middle of the national park, mainly in the [Botum Sakor District](#), but involving all of the three districts contributing to the park.^[16]

In January 2011, a concession agreement was signed with the company Paradise Investment Co., Ltd. for business activities in a 9,835 ha (98.35 km²) area. The land is located in the interior of the [Botum Sakor District](#).^[17] Paradise Investment Co., Ltd. is Korean based and primarily engaged in the [casino](#) business, but it operates in three associated segments: casinos, hotels and spas.^{[18][19]}

In July 2011, a concession agreement was signed with the company Sinimexim Investment Co., Ltd. to construct [Rubber](#) plantations and conduct unspecified agro-industrial business activities in a 4,280 ha (42.80 km²) area. The land is located in the interior of the [Botum Sakor District](#), just north of the land concession with Paradise Investment Co., Ltd..^[20]

In December 2012, a contract was signed with an unknown company to construct a [reservoir](#) and [hydropower](#) dam, involving a 6,771 ha (67.71 km²) area. The land is apparently located in the [Botum Sakor District](#).^[21]

Impact [\[edit\]](#)

A simple calculation reveals that the total area involved in the agricultural, industrial and constructional projects, adds up to more than 119,120 ha (1191.2 km²). This comprise 70% of the national park.^[22] Needless to say, if the projects are allowed to unfold as they are planned, it will mean the ultimate destruction of Botum Sakor National Park.

[Landsat](#) satellite images, journalistic investigations and activist reports clearly shows how large areas have been clear-cut at an accelerated pace in the concessions since 2008. Especially the coastal mangrove has suffered and is almost non-existing throughout the park, as of 2012.^[23]

Illegal logging [\[edit\]](#)

There is now substantial evidence, that the criminal practises of illegal logging on the premises of the national park, has become a problem once again in the last few years and at an alarmingly accelerated pace even. Satellite images ([Landsat](#) and [Envisat](#)), journalistic investigations and activist reports shows how the formerly densely forested interior has been thinned to an extent, that almost all of Botum Sakor National Park has been directly affected. Many of the densely forested habitats are now degraded and categorized as so-called mixed forest habitat because of this thinning.^{[24][25]} There seems to be a number of reasons for the new illegal logging practises and various groups participate, spanning from opportunistic locals, some of the companies involved in the concessions (see above) and organized criminal syndicates. Some of the logged timbers are [Rosewood](#) and various threatened [hardwood](#) species used in luxury buildings and for expensive furniture, but also plants like the [Saffrol Laurel](#) tree (*Cinnamomum Parthenoxylon*, a member of the [Cinnamon tree genus](#)) and [yellow vine](#)^[26] are being cut and collected to make psychoactive drugs like [ecstasy](#), for south-east Asian [traditional medicine](#), etc..^[27] Many spots where illegal timbers and plant harvests are processed or cut up, have been uncovered within the national park itself.^{[28][29][30][31][32]}

Poaching [\[edit\]](#)

Poaching in Cambodia's national parks remains extremely rampant^[33] and Botum Sakor is no exception to this trend. The methods that are most disturbing in Botum Sakor are the setting of **snare**s, and the opportunistic hunting of small mammal species for food. The poaching in Cambodia have many reasons, but one of the reasons in Botum Sakor National Park is feeding the **traditional Chinese medicinal** market.^[8] It is generally believed, that this area of Cambodia, classified as one of the world's 25 top **biodiversity** hot spots by Wildlife Alliance, is destined to be turned into a ghost-forest unless radical measures are taken.^[citation needed]

Fragmentation of habitats [edit]

Habitat fragmentation of the national park is a concern. The recently completed highway route 48 along the northern boundary of the park isolates it from the southern Cardamom Mountains. While some animals can cope, the highway have clearly fragmented and confined the **arboreal** species population such as the Pileated gibbon.^[8]

Active NGOs in the area [edit]

The following **NGOs** are known to be active in the area:^[34]

- Flora & Fauna International^[35]
- Conservation International^[36]
- Wildlife Alliance^[37]

References and notes [edit]

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- ↑ ^{***a b c d e f***} REPORT 4; Frontier Cambodia, 2010
- ↑ Daltry and Traeholt
- ↑ REPORT 4, Frontier Cambodia 2010, p.4
- ↑ **Botum Sakor National Park: A threatened haven of biodiversity** The Earth Times, 12. August 2011 (retrieved February 2014)
- ↑ Note: Some scientists and sources claims that the population size is overestimated, since it was based on studies in the northern parts only, where the gibbons tend to crowd. (Source: REPORT 4, Frontier Cambodia 2010, p.4)
- ↑ Traeholt, C., Bonthoeun, R., Rawson, B., Samuth, M., Virak, C., and Sok Vuthin 2005. *Status review of pileated gibbon, Hylobates pileatus, and yellow-cheeked crested gibbon, Nomascus gabriellae, in Cambodia*, FFI Cambodia Programme Office, Phnom Penh
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- ↑ Note: Only known from interviews and unidentified bear marks at present though. (Source: REPORT 4, Frontier Cambodia 2010, p.6)
- ↑ REPORT 4; Frontier Cambodia, 2010, p.29
- ↑ REPORT 4, Frontier Cambodia 2010, p.36
- ↑ **Land Tenure Cambodia Profile** USAID
- ↑ **Concession Profile - The Green Rich Co., Ltd** ODC
- ↑ **Concession Profile - Union Development Group Co.,Ltd** ODC
- ↑ **Concession Profile - Koh kong sez co.,ltd** ODC
- ↑ **Concession Profile - L.Y.P Group Co., Ltd** ODC
- ↑ **Concession Profile - Paradise Investment Co., Ltd** ODC
- ↑ **Paradise Investment Co Ltd** Financial Times (retrieved 10. February 2014)
- ↑ **Paradise Group** Official homepage for the company. English available,
- ↑ **Concession Profile - Sinimexim Investment Co., Ltd** ODC
- ↑ **concession Profile** ODC
- ↑ For nuances on the exact area, see the talk page under "Agriculture, industry and construction projects".
- ↑ **Global Forest Change (interactive map 2000-2012)** University of Maryland. Landsat satellite.
- ↑ **Maps of forest cover by year** ODC
- ↑ **Forest Cover - Regional animations** ODC
- ↑ Yellow Vine is aka. Voer Romiet, with the scientific names of *Coscinium spp.*, *Coscinium usitatum* or *Coscinium fenestratum*. Source: *Coscinium usitatum* Pierre The Plant List.
- ↑ Ashwell, D. and Walston, N. (2008), p. 29
- ↑ Documentary film: **Forest of Ecstasy** Adam Yamaguchi (reporter). Vanguard 2009. Hosted by Drug Documentaries.
- ↑ Documentary: **Forest of Ecstasy** Adam Yamaguchi (reporter). Vanguard 2009. Hosted by Cambodian Information Center

30. ^ Dominguez, Robert Jonathan: [Cambodia's Forests of Ecstasy](#) a senior research project. North Carolina State University (Dr. Erin Sills)
31. ^ Documentary film: [Death in the Forest](#) ; David O'Shea (reporter). SBS Dateline 2012. Investigations on the shooting of environmental activist [Chut Wutty](#).
32. ^ Documentary transcript: [Death in the Forest](#) SBS Dateline. The film link does not work on this website.
33. ^ [2. Protected areas and development: lessons from Cambodia](#) International Centre for Environmental Management & Partners, p.35
34. ^ [Koh Kong Conservation Corridor](#) Lonely Planet (7. February 2014)
35. ^ [Cambodia](#) Flora & Fauna International
36. ^ [Cambodia](#) Conservation International
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- The Phnom Penh Post: "[Work on \\$5 billion tourism project begins](#)" , October 1.st 2010.
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- [Open Development Cambodia](#) ODC

External links [edit]

- [Lonely Planet's page on travel to Botum Sakor National Park](#)
- [Botumsakor Community Development Organization](#) BCDO
- [Interactive map of the area](#) Open Development Cambodia (ODC)

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