



Media Release

For immediate release

DNA analysis reveals 35 purebred Siamese crocodiles at Cambodia's Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre

Phnom Penh, Cambridge, Washington 10 Nov. 2009 – DNA testing of 69 rescued crocodiles at Cambodia's Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center has revealed that over 50% are purebred Siamese crocodiles, a critically endangered species that was "effectively extinct in the wild" until 2000.

In February 2009, Fauna & Flora International (FFI), the Cambodian Forestry Administration (FA), and Wildlife Alliance, with support from the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, collected blood and tissue samples from crocodiles housed at the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre (PTWRC). DNA analysis by the Department of Genetics at Kasetsart University in Bangkok, Thailand revealed that 35 of these animals are indeed purebred Siamese crocodiles.

"This could provide a critical lifeline for the long-term preservation of this critically endangered species," according to Mr. Nhek Ratanapech, Director of the PTWRC.

The DNA analysis shows six adults that could be compatible breeding pairs and 29 young/hatchlings that may be suitable for release. Phnom Tamao will now be able to begin developing a conservation breeding programme with technical support from FFI/FA's Cambodian Crocodile Conservation Programme and Wildlife Alliance.

The organisations hope that a captive breeding programme will begin in early 2010 with potential offspring raised over a two-year period for release in suitable natural habitats in southwest Cambodia, with guidance from the IUCN Re-Introduction Specialist Group.

Once common and widespread throughout Southeast Asia, the Siamese crocodile is locally extinct from 99% of its original range, and listed as Critically Endangered on the

IUCN Red List, Poaching, illegal trade, and habitat loss have had a ruinous impact on wild populations. Siamese crocodiles declined swiftly during the 20th Century until they were declared “effectively extinct in the wild” by the IUCN Crocodile Action Plan in 1992.

FFI and the Cambodian Forestry Administration launched the Cambodian Crocodile Conservation Programme (CCCP) in 2000 when Siamese crocodiles were rediscovered during a joint expedition in Cambodia’s Cardamom Mountains.

Since the rediscovery, FFI and its partners have scoured Cambodia and neighbouring countries find out more information about the status and distribution of Siamese crocodiles. Despite being protected by law in Cambodia, wild Siamese crocodiles are still being captured and sold to crocodile farms. New significant challenges and threats that are emerging include major hydroelectric developments in key rivers and increased human encroachment upon habitat.

FFI and Wildlife Alliance express their appreciation to the Cambodian Forestry Administration and the Cambodian Fisheries Administration for their efforts to support the conservation of Cambodia’s Siamese crocodiles. Wildlife Alliance and FFI would also like to thank the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund for providing the funding to make this DNA analysis possible.

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About Fauna & Flora International (FFI) (www.fauna-flora.org)

FFI protects threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science and take account of human needs. Operating in more than 40 countries worldwide – mainly in the developing world – FFI saves species from extinction and habitats from destruction, while improving the livelihoods of local people. Founded in 1903, FFI is the world's longest established international conservation body and a registered charity.

About Wildlife Alliance (www.wildlifealliance.org)

Wildlife Alliance's mission is to protect and preserve wildlife and forests for future generations. Our field operations train and equip park rangers to fight crimes against nature and prevent poaching and illegal habitat destruction in Southeast Asia and the Russian Far East through collaboration with governments and communities. We improve the management of protected areas, rescue wildlife victimized by the illegal wildlife trade, support sustainable development and environmental education initiatives, and empower countries to enforce trans-boundary wildlife regulations. Wildlife Alliance's Care for Rescued Wildlife programme provides technical support and training at Phnom Tamao.

About the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre

The Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre, a facility run by the Government of Cambodia, houses animals rescued from the illegal wildlife trade, which are unable to be released back to their natural habitats. More than 1200 animals from more than 80 wildlife species are represented, including a large number of crocodiles rescued from wildlife dealers, poachers, and illegal private ownership.