

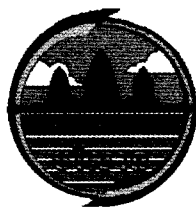
# CARDAMOM MOUNTAINS

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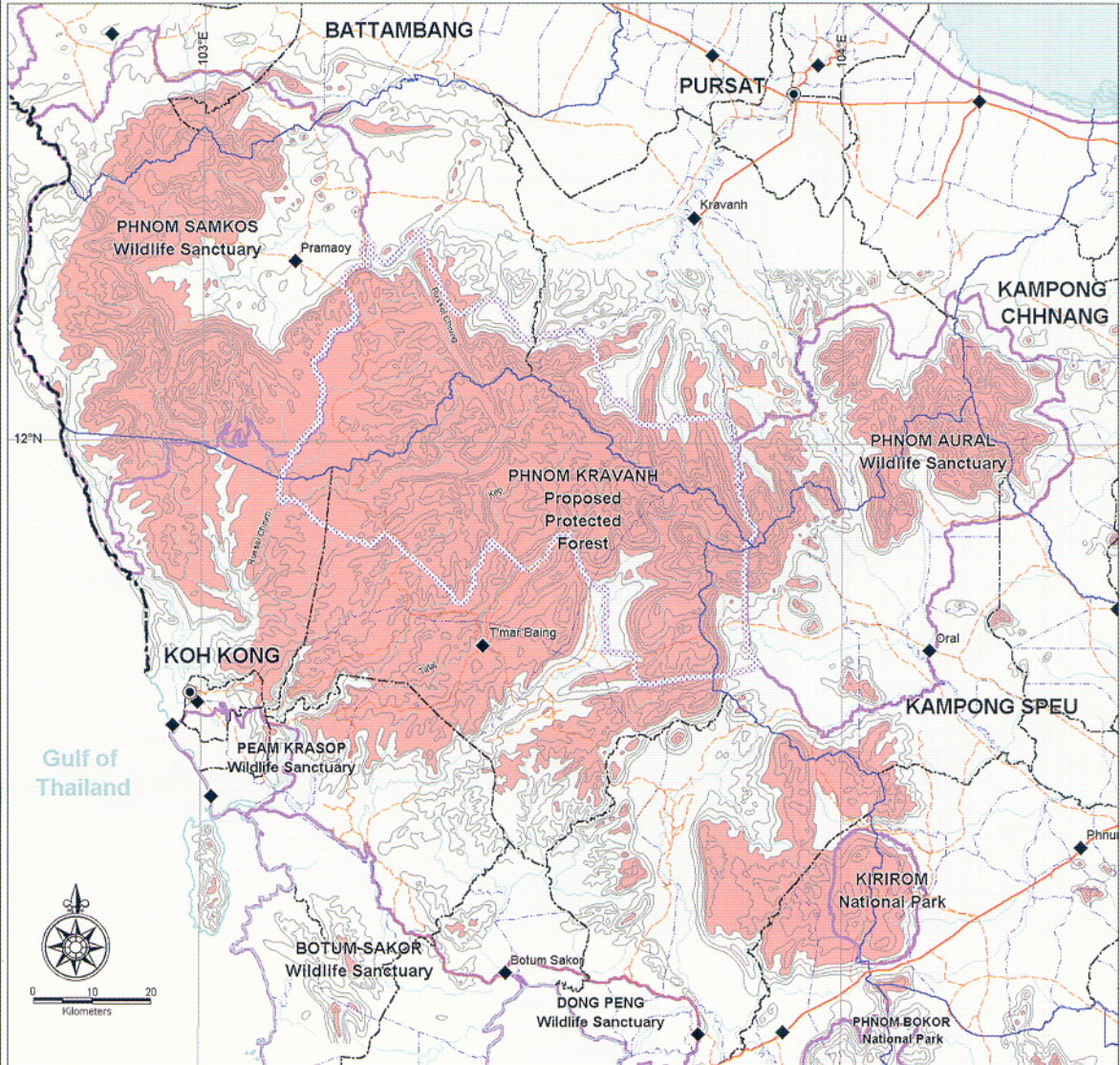
BIODIVERSITY SURVEY 2000



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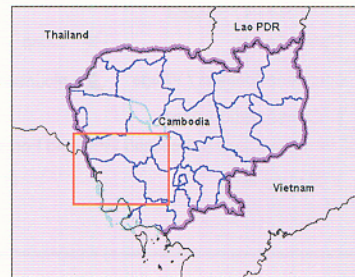
MAP 2: THE CARDAMOM MOUNTAINS



LEGEND

- Provincial Boundary
- District Boundary
- Commune Boundary
- International Boundary
- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Contour line (every 1000 ft)
- Rivers / Streams
- Provincial Town
- District Center
- Conservation Area
- Phnom Kravanh Proposed Protected Forest
- Cardamom area (>1000 ft, excluding Kirirom Plateau)

Location Diagram



1996) and apparently support a large population. This area forms an essential link between the Samkos Wildlife Sanctuary, Botum-Sakor National Park and the protected areas of the Elephants Mountains. If this area is destroyed or mismanaged, the natural migrations of the elephants would be impeded and numbers could decline.

### **[Javan rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus*] (IUCN - Critically Endangered C2a)**

No evidence was found of the survival of rhinos in either study site. The majority of people questioned about this species did not believe it to still survive here, although most knew of it and accepted its recent past occurrence in the Cardamom Mountains.

Reports of the existence of rhino were obtained from both areas, the most promising unfortunately being second-hand. A French pilot flew over the Cardamoms 2 months prior to the survey and saw two rhinos in a clearing on the Mount Tumpor complex. Although a recent sighting, the original source has not yet been tracked, so an exact locality or first-hand description has not been obtained. Older sightings – including a very accurate description and drawing of the footprint – were from the Mount Tumpor Complex, but the most recent reliable report was from 1984. The evidence from the Central Cardamom range was even less convincing: only one person interviewed during this survey believed rhino to be present but he had never seen one.

The Javan rhino is one of the rarest large mammals in the world (Foose & van Strien, 1997). The Indochinese subspecies (*R. s. annamiticus*) is currently known from only Dong Nai in Vietnam and has a known population of between three and eight individuals, while the nominate subspecies is represented by approximately 50 individuals in Ujung Kulon National Park, Java. Rhino horn is a prized ingredient in traditional medicine and fetches high prices. This, along with the abundance of armed men in the forests during the wars last century, does not leave great hope for the survival of this species in Cambodia.

In suitable terrain, rhino trails and wallows will remain visible many years after extirpation of the species. On steep slopes especially, deep rhino trails can remain visible for 10 years or more (N. van Strien, pers. comm.). No such features were sighted during the survey and despite the remoteness of some of the areas visited, evidence of recent human activity was always found. This survey does not provide conclusive evidence of the absence of rhino in the Cardamom Mountains, but if any do survive, they are likely to be a few scattered individuals.

Thouless (1987) received reports of rhino in eight localities in Cambodia. Despite this, the Cardamom Mountains are likely to be the only area in Cambodia remote enough for a population of rhinos to survive into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The present survey targeted areas where interview data (Boonratana, 1999; H. Weiler, pers. comm.; also unpublished data) suggested the highest likelihood of finding sign of rhino. No evidence of this species was found so the chances of future surveys being successful are low, but the area is vast and surveys were limited in the area they covered.

The IUCN Status, Survey and Conservation Action Plan for Asian Rhinos (Foose & van Strien 1997) states a need for status data for this species in Cambodia. The results of this survey lead to the opinion that the chances of finding rhino in Cambodia are very slim and the status of this species should be treated as critical until exhaustive surveys have been conducted in all possible rhino areas throughout the country.

