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THE HAIRY-NOSED OTTER (*Lutra sumatrana*) IN CAMBODIA

Barney Long

*FFI, Indochina Programme, IPO Box 78, 104B Pho Hue, Hanoi, Vietnam
e-mail: ffi@fpt.vn or barneylong@mcmail.com*

Abstract: With the change in the political situation in Cambodia, it has been possible since 1998 to undertake conservation activities in the country. During field work in the Cardomon mountains, a single hairy-nosed otter was seen in a market. The author requests information on the distribution of the hairy-nosed otter in Indochina and Thailand, and additional funds to support surveys in Cambodia in February and April.

In 1998 the hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*) was thought to be extinct but recently it has been discovered in the Phru Toa Dang Swamp Forest in the Narathiwat Province, Thailand and U Minh Thuong Nature Reserve in southern Vietnam.

Four species of otter are found in Indochina the Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*), Asian small clawed otter (*Amblonyx cinereus*), the Smooth coated otter (*Lutra perspicillata*) and the hairy-nosed otter. All species are regionally threatened due to hunting pressures driven by the trade in their pelts, habitat loss, pollution and disturbance.

General mammal surveys in Indochina often overlook otters so the distribution of these animals is not clearly understood. What is known, however, is that that suitable habitat for the hairy-nosed otter is very rare and more information is required on the distribution and habitat requirements for each of the species.

Between the two known populations of hairy-nosed otters are huge expanses of forest in southern Cambodia. Until 1998 the security situation in Cambodia has prevented biological work, but since then conservation organisations have been working in the area. Last year I was involved in surveys of the Cardamom Mountains in south-west Cambodia. During fieldwork three of the four otter species were identified and populations appeared to be more healthy than in other parts of Indochina. In addition a single hairy-nosed otter was seen in a market. Myself and Fauna and Flora International are very keen to work in the peat forests of southern Cambodia to assess the otter populations there and also to try and identify sites where the hairy-nosed otter still survive. The elusive otter civet (*Cynogale sp.*) may also be found in these forests.

I would be very interested to hear from anyone with information on the relevant species, especially in regards to their distribution in Indochina and Thailand. We are also looking for additional funds to support the surveys, which will occur in February to April. If anyone can help or would be interested in hearing more about our work in Cambodia please contact me on barneylong@mcmail.com.