

WORKSHOP REPORT

OTTER TRAINING WORKSHOP PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

February 24th to March 3rd, 2009

International Otter Survival Fund (IOSF), Conservation International (CI) and IUCN Otter Specialist Group (OSG) jointly organized an 8-day International Workshop on Asian Otter Conservation in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from February 24 to March 03, 2009. The main objective of the workshop was to raise the interest and awareness about otters and their conservation in Cambodia and to train Cambodian University students in otter research. However, a few international students and researchers were also invited to share their experiences.

The workshop started on 24th February under the chairmanship of Mr. Ros Chor from Ministry of Environment, Government of Cambodia and after covering a number of indoor and outdoor training activities, ended successfully with a nice closing ceremony on 3rd March, 2009 with souvenirs, prizes and certificates distribution among the participants.

Fortyeight participants representing 11 different countries including Cambodia, Denmark, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, UK, USA and Vietnam attended the workshop. Around 25 International students and otter researchers, 11 resource persons and 12 officials from different government departments from Cambodia participated. A pre-course evaluation test of the students, introductory lectures and presentations, question and answer sessions, students' presentations, visits to zoo and otter habitats like lakes, forests etc. and quiz competition among the students at the end of the workshop were the major activities of the workshop. A delegation of three conservationists from WWF Pakistan also shared with the participants the otter conservation activities in Pakistan through a presentation.

Resource persons included Dr. Nicole Duplaix and Ms. Clarisse Reiter (USA), Carol Benetto (UK), Dr. Syed Ainul Hussain and Dr. Rochi Badola (India), Dr. Padma de Silva and Dr. Mangala de Silva (Sri Lanka), Mr. Heng Sokrieth, Mr. Peov Somanak and Ms. Annette Olsson (Cambodia) and Dr. Budsabong (Thailand).

The workshop was a unique opportunity for the students to learn about the otters especially the Asian otter species, meet and exchange the experiences with the experts, and have an idea of the latest advancements in the field. The participants of the workshop learnt about otter identification techniques, camera trapping techniques, captive breeding techniques for otters, food habits analysis, spraint analysis and otter habitat assessment techniques.

The role of Workshop Organizing Committee lead by Annette Olsson, Research Manager CI, Cambodia and the active support of IUCN OSG, CI and IOSF in the successful organization of the workshop were greatly appreciated. All the team members worked devotedly day and night to make this event successful. We congratulate the IUCN OSG, CI and IOSF on the successful organization of the workshop.

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