



WWF

CASE STORY

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Mekong Bird Protection and Rural Livelihood Improvement



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River Tern chicks and egg

ON THE GROUND

Sitting on the ground surrounded by swaying grass, Tign Vic attentively watches the top of a tree where two Lesser Adjutant chicks were hatched one week ago. Alone in the Mekong Flooded Forest (MFF), Tign Vic spends his days protecting and guarding the nests of this threatened species, a job he does in collaboration with the Cambodian Government and WWF.

Vic talks about today's success: "In total 4 new chicks have hatched, and they all look healthy. I hope to see these chicks leave the nests in the coming weeks so that I can successfully accomplish my duties as a nest protector."

Local communities, often unknowingly, are contributing to the decline of these species. Egg and chick gathering, illegal logging, poaching, and habitat disturbance all threaten these birds.

Vic confesses that before he was a nest protector he was unaware that these birds were endangered or important, but now feels the need to protect them.

"I really did not know and even did not care about the birds and their significance. In addition,

I used to destroy nests for pleasure and even gathered the chicks to eat at home as well," Vic says. He noted that he continued these practices until 2008 when WWF conducted awareness workshops that made him understand and recognize the importance of the Mekong birds.

"Previously I did not realize that many of these birds are very rare. I now would like to take part in bird protection," he continued.



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To improve understanding and reduce threats, WWF in collaboration with the government's Forestry Administration, has established a project focusing on protecting the nests of the White-shouldered Ibis, River Tern, Red-headed Vulture, and Lesser Adjutant and their habitat, while concurrently improving local rural livelihoods.

Vic is one of 98 villagers who were hired to protect the nests in 2012. This year, Vic and his friend were issued a contract to protect the nests of Lesser Adjutants about 5 kilometers away from their house.

To guard the nests, Vic and his friend spend at least 45 minutes traveling from their homes to the nest sites. Vic describes his daily routine, "I wake up in the early morning to prepare my food and drink and then I spend morning until evening guarding the nests. I have to carefully monitor any people moving closer to my nest who could disturb the birds."

Ty Sin is another villager who is working to protect the nests of Lesser Adjutant within the MFF. He spends more than one hour walking from his house to the nest site every day.

Ty Sin describes his motivation for protecting the nests, "I decided to guard the nests because these birds are endangered and I do not want these birds to disappear from my village." Last year, under his protection, 20 new chicks of Lesser Adjutant were fledged from 10 nests.



Red-headed Vultures male ad female



Local boy holding a chick of White-Shouldered Ibis

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"I am very happy with my achievements last year because all of the chicks hatched and successfully left their nests. I am now hoping to see new chicks in coming months," he adds.

Married since 2002, Vic now has 4 children and admits that finding income to support his family is difficult.

"Before nest protection, farming was my major source of work, while fishing and gathering non-timber forest products were additional ways to earn money to support my family. But I can now generate income by protecting nests," he adds.

Despite spending much time in the forest alone, Vic likes his work as a nest protector. "I do hope that my work will contribute to saving these birds from extinction so that my young children will be able to see these birds in future."

For more information

Please e-mail your inquiries to asnarith.tep@wwf.panda.org or visit our website at cambodia.panda.org



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