



Asian Turtle News

News from the Frontlines of Conservation

The Asian Turtle Conservation Network (ATCN)

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Mekong Nesting Sites Yield First In-situ Success for hatching Asian Giant Soft-shell Turtles (*Pelochelys cantorii*) in Cambodia.

Efforts to protect on of Asia's largest turtle species have gained momentum with the successful hatching of 91 juveniles from protected nests along the Mekong River in Cambodia.

The very very small giant Asian soft-shell turtles, *Pelochelys cantorii*, scrambled down the sandbank into the cool water of the great Mekong following several months of guarded care by members of the Cambodian Turtle Conservation Team (CTCT).

The project, which involves activities focused on protection of this critically endangered species within its river habitat first got started in 2007 following surveys carried out along the Mekong River by the CTCT and staff of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

In early 2008 efforts to protect nesting sites were initiated in Kratie Province close to the border of Stoeng Treng Province. Local fishermen were hired to protect the nests of turtles that were observed nesting in January and February. A total of three nests containing 117 eggs were located and protected. After around two months 91 hatchlings emerged (78%) and were released back into the Mekong River.

It is hoped that in the coming years additional nests can be located and protected by local community teams to give the eggs and hatchlings a fighting chance during this vulnerable stage in their life cycle.

Activities will also be undertaken in fishing communities along the river to raise awareness about the species and its need for protection as it is still not uncommon for large adults to be caught by fishermen in the Mekong.

This project was co-funded by the Cambodian Turtle Conservation Project and Conservation International (CI) and conducted in collaboration with the Fisheries Administration of Cambodia and the World Wide Fund for Nature - Cambodia.



A hatchling Asian giant soft-shell turtle takes an easy snack before being released.



Some of the 91 hatchlings before they were released back into the Mekong River.



Hatchling Asian giant Soft-shell turtles taking their first swim in the Mekong River.

Photos by the Cambodia Turtle Conservation Team

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