

CAMBODIA- 19 JANUARY 2018 – 1 FEBRUARY 2018

I visited Cambodia last year for my birthday week celebration. This was not a strict mammal watching trip so instead of giving a day by day log of the trip, I will highlight areas I visited to see wildlife. I researched all the areas I visited online.

Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center. This is located 40 km south of Phnom Penh in the Ba Ti District. The center was set up to rehabilitate and rescue animals from the illegal wildlife trade as well as victims of habitat loss and human-wildlife conflict. The end goal of course being trying to release animals, however some deemed non releasable are kept in the facility that is open to the public. My main reason for visiting was to see the rescued Sun Bears. The center is funded by Free the Bears and has one of the largest sanctuaries for sun bears in the world. Some of the bears had the largest enclosures I had ever seen for captive bears. All the bears were also in excellent health and were not showing any stress signs/stereotypic behavior one can sometimes see in zoos. While some people do not like to see animals in captivity, the work that is done alone for wildlife is worth spending money on a visit. They also work to educate school children and locals about the wildlife in Cambodia. They also have a small gift shop with various Free the Bears objects for sale.

It was also a good place for me to see my first Indochinese Ground Squirrels. To the left of the large group of fenced sun bear enclosures is a small shed with various wood piles in front of it. I saw 3 squirrels on the wood piles. Despite being able to watch them easily, as soon as I lifted my camera they ran off. We also saw a large troop of wild Long Tailed Macaques here.



Wat Phnom Temple – this is a Buddhist temple in the center of Phnom Penh off Norodom Blvd. It is on the only “hill” in the city. If you have the temple and main staircase behind you, across the street on your left there are two trees filled with Lyle's flying foxes. You can easily see them as well as their droppings on the sidewalk. One tree is estimated to have about 1000 in it, the other about 250.



Kratie – this is a well known location to see Irrawaddy Dolphins. What I did not realize is how easy it was to see them. The Dolphin Watch is north of Kratie itself (about 20 km along River Road by the village of Kampi). There is a small “pooled” off area of the Mekong River that tourists are taken to in traditional

fisherman boats. From the dock site to seeing an actual dolphin took 2 minutes. We watched two separate family groups that both came very close to our boat. Both groups had calves with them.



Rajobori Villas – besides being one of my favorite places I have ever stayed in Asia, it is also a good spot to see Lyle's flying foxes. The villas are located on Koh

del Trong bat Cheunchien island in the Mekong River. Getting there takes a 10 minute boat ride, a five minute motorbike ride, and a ten minute shuttle from downtown Kratie. Behind the villa restaurant and a very small grassy knoll there are several large trees with the bats in them. You can hear them when you are sitting in the restaurant. You can also watch them at dusk flying around the island.



Gibbon Spotting Cambodia – I decided to visit the Veun Sai-Siem Pang Conservation Center to see Northern Yellow Cheeked Gibbons. They are considered morphologically similar to the Southern YC Gibbon, however have different vocalizations and genetics. They were described in 2010 and have yet to be approved by IUCN as a separate species. In 2010 a group was habituated for researchers and in 2012 trips were opened for tourists. They only allow 2-6 people per day. I had researched the trip online before I went and read they had an



approximate 85% success rate for seeing the gibbons during the dry season.... I can only report on my experience and people may now have different ones.

The tour starts from the Terre Rouge hotel located in the province of Ratanakiri along Banlung Lake, which is south of the border of Laos. We were picked up by our guide Vutha who had told us in the last two months none of his guests had seen the gibbons. We started with a

cultural tour to two villages. This included a 20 km boat ride to Kackork Village.

This village included a tour of a cemetery. The grave sites had elaborate headstones and we were told for one year, once a day, family members bring objects to the grave and on day 365 they sacrifice a cow. Half way through the tour I heard the unmistakable noises cows



make when injured/in the throws of death, and we were told we were in luck as it was day 365 for one of the grave sites. We were told we could watch.....

After not watching that experience we continued about 32 km by boat along the Sesan River to the town of Veun Sai. This was where we picked up our local guide and gibbon tracker Chourng. We were told he was the best tracker in the village. While he does not speak English, he



is interactive and generally a nice guy to be around. From this point we took an approximate 50 minute ride on the back of a motorbike. We arrived at the conservation center station. They have basic toilets and an area where you can wash off, an area where food is cooked and a raised building with small rooms to sleep in (on mats under mosquito nets). When we were there, about 20 university students from Australia studying primates were there as well as two PHD students. What I did not realize is the area has a semi-habituated group of Indochinese Silvered

(Germaines) langurs as well as Red Shanked Douc Langurs. Had I known this (and had I not been with a friend whose idea of camping is staying at a Holiday Inn), I would have wanted to spend more time there. After getting to the camp area I walked with our guide and tracker for about 2 hours in the conservation area. I did not see a single mammal, and any bird we came across quickly left. I think the hunting pressure here (as well as logging pressure as I heard trees being cut down) is high. I was told the gibbons were not hunted. That evening we met one of the pHD students who was studying habituated gibbon behavior to tourists. She told us that the dominant male gibbon in the habituated group was missing/dead. Instead of finding another mate, the female decided to go the easy route and had now pair bonded with her oldest son. She was also pregnant. Since this occurred the mother-"son" pair only were calling about once a week, if that. I was told that morning they had called so the chance of the next day was minimal. She also told us if they do not call we will not find them. With that wonderful bit of news to sleep on, we woke up the next morning at 3 am to trek about an hour to the area where the gibbons lived. Our guide and tracker, as well as the pHD student and her tracker joined us. As day was breaking we listened to multiple groups of gibbons calling.....except for ours. Our guide decided he was going to look anyway. The students tracker picked one half of the forest and our tracker took the other half. We were told to wait at a small picnic table in front of the forest. After close to 2 hours, the student's tracker came back and told us he could not find them. 15 minutes later our guide also showed up with no good gibbon news. The pHD student at this point told us we would not find the gibbons so decided to leave.

Chourng decided to not give up and opted to search the area where the other tracker had looked. My friend and I decided to join him. It took about 30 minutes of walking off trail, through dense forest, under multiple huge spider webs that made my friend consider death vs going going under, and searching multiple fruiting trees for Chourng to find them. We got to spend a little over an hour with them and got close views of the dominant female as well as her son-partner. I was told that the researchers were trying to habituate a second group for tourism, so checking the status on that might be worthwhile before a visit. If you do go, request Chourng.



Baylon Temple And Angkor Wat Temple – in Siem Reap – as with probably all the the temples I could hear small microbats (and see fresh droppings on the group) in all the large entrance ways. There are also Long Tailed Macaques hanging around the majority of the temples looking (and stealing) for handouts from tourists.

The Templantation Resort where is stayed in Siem Reap was a great location for Cambodian Striped Squirrels. Any of

the trees behind the rooms are a good place to look.

In Seim Reap on the road facing in front of the Botanical Gardens in between the Raffles and Victoria Hotels is a long row of trees filled with Lyle's Flying Foxes.



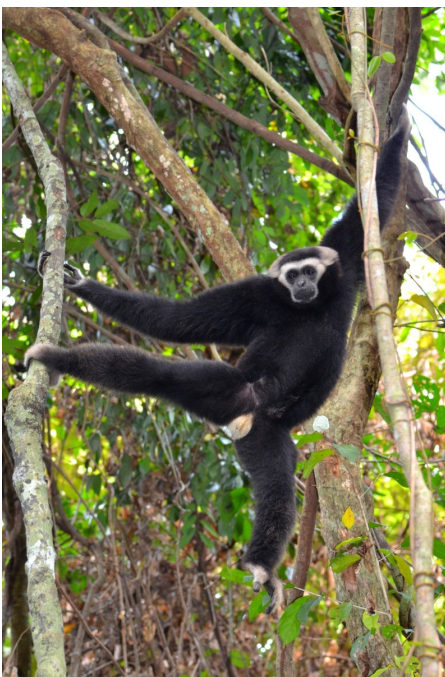
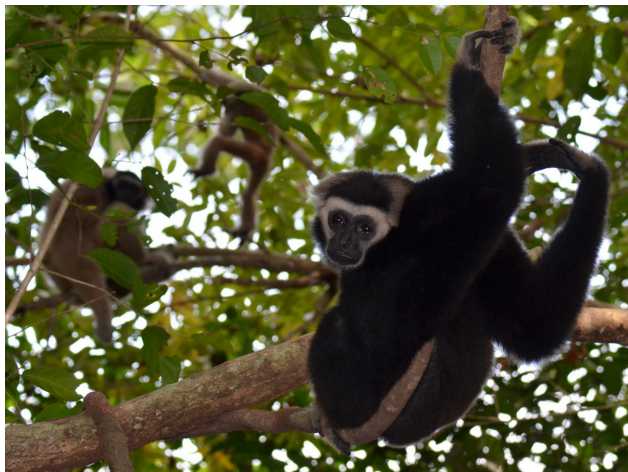
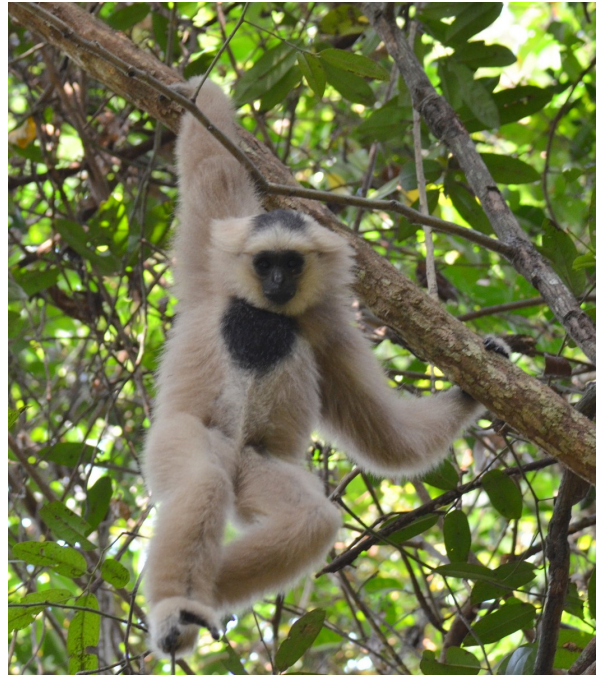


Ang Trapaeng Thmor Reserve – I did a two day/1 night tour to try to see Eld's deer. The reserve is about 1.5 hours from Seim Reap. The tours are run by the Sam Veasna Center for Wildlife Conservation. According to the website and what I was told by the tour company the deer are present from January – March. What I was told when my guide showed up was they were having a progressively more difficult time finding them, and usually only see them now in March. Despite looking in good locations and talking to locals about sightings, we could not find them. We

did come across a very shocked to see a human so close Golden Jackal while hiking. It also rained both days we were there so this most likely contributed to our bad luck.

Kulen Mountain – we did a one day tour of Kulen Mountain located about 45 minutes from Seim Reap. This is supposed to be a good site to see Indochinese Silvered Langur. I had researched online the chances to see them, and also talked to a local ground agent who thought we had an 80% chance. Our local guide (unfortunately I lost my notes with his name) however told me in 2 years of going frequently he had only seen them 4 times. We hiked on the mountain for around 4 hours along various trails and did not see any signs of the monkeys. We did however see multiple skittish Variable Squirrels (I was told them were hunted here) and walked in a small cave that had 2 bats in it (unsure of the species). It is a beautiful hike however and if you just want a break from Seim Reap and not look at a monkey and have time to spare, it is worth the trip.

I had read before arriving in Cambodia that Wildlife Alliance was working on releasing rehabilitated Pileated Gibbons in the Angkor Temple Complex. This was part of their past range. In December 2013 the first pair was released and they have already had two offspring. I did not think seeing them was a possibility, but our Kulen Mountain guide had previously been working with them near the release site. After a few phone calls and another visit to the temple complex (each visit costs about 30 US dollars), I was looking at my first Pileated Gibbons. You can message me through Jon for more specific details.



Trip list

1. Indochinese Ground Squirrel – *Menetes berdmorei*
2. Lyle's flying fox – *Pteropus lylei*
3. Irrawaddy Dolphin -*Orcaella brevirostris*
4. Cambodian Striped Squirrel – *Tamiops rodolphi*
5. Long Tailed Macaque – *Macaca fascicularis*
6. Variable Squirrel – *Callosciurus finlaysonii*
7. Golden Jackal – *Canis aureus*
8. Pileated Gibbon -*Hylobates pileatus*
9. Northern Yellow Cheeked Gibbon – *Nomascus annamensis*
10. Micorbat spp