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Joint Press Release

“Secrets of the Karst: New Species and Rare Wildlife Discovered in Cambodia’s Karst Caves”

Phnom Penh, 23 March 2026: A new biodiversity survey, published today, has revealed the vast array of species living within Cambodia’s karst ecosystems. Exploring over 60 caves across ten hills in the Battambang Province, western Cambodia, the survey uncovers a treasure trove of extraordinary creatures, many found nowhere else on Earth.

Some of the most significant findings of the survey, which was led by Fauna & Flora-Cambodia Programme in collaboration with Cambodia’s Ministry of Environment and field experts, include the discovery of many species that are new to science: three new geckos (*Cyrtodactylus kampingpoiensis*, *Hemiphyllodactylus khpoh*, and *Dixonius noctivagus*), two micro-snails (*Clostophis udayaditinus* and *Chamalycaeus aduncus*), two millipede (*Orthomorpha efefai* and *Orthomorpha battambangiensis*) which all these 7 new species have been published, while other new 3 geckos (*Gehyra sp. nov.*, *Cyrtodactylus sp. nov.* and *Dixonius sp. nov.*) and a new pit viper species (*Trimeresurus sp. nov.*) are currently being described.

The survey confirmed the presence of several global threatened species, including the Sunda pangolin, Indochinese silvered langur, long-tailed macaque and green peafowl. This finding highlights the urgent need to protect this habitat.

Karst landscapes are formed from limestone hills and caves, creating unique features such as sinkholes, springs and underground streams. Although still little explored, karst is one of the most biodiverse habitats on Earth, with high levels of endemism. These landscapes are also culturally and spiritually important to local communities and are increasingly valued for ecotourism.

Karst areas face growing threats from quarrying, poorly managed tourism, wildfire, illegal logging and wildlife hunting.

H.E. Khvay Atitya, Undersecretary of State and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Environment, stated:

“This important survey once again demonstrates that Cambodia is a country of outstanding natural richness and global biodiversity significance. Our karst ecosystems are not only home to rare and newly discovered species, but they also provide cultural, spiritual and economic value to local communities. The Royal Government of Cambodia, through the Ministry of Environment, is strongly committed to strengthening the protection and sustainable management of these unique landscapes. We will continue to work closely with our partners to ensure that development is balanced with conservation, so that our natural heritage is safeguarded for future generations.”

Sothearen Thi, Karst Biodiversity Coordinator commented:

“Cambodia’s karst areas are a treasure trove of scientific secrets waiting to be uncovered. From undiscovered reptiles and snails, to hidden caves – there is still so much we do not know about these unique ecosystems and the diversity of creatures living within them. But, without sustainable management, we may never find out what these areas truly hold. Karst landscapes are facing many human-driven challenges, and biologically significant species could go extinct before they have even been discovered. We are working with the Cambodian government and local partners to increase protection of the landscapes, with sustainable management being the number one priority.”

Fauna & Flora is working with local partners to conserve Cambodia's karst, including the recent release of [guidelines for sustainable development and management of cave ecosystems](#). The guidelines integrate international best practices with Cambodian context, providing practical measures to safeguard bat colonies, preserve rare and endemic cave biodiversity, promote sustainable guano harvesting and ensure responsible tourism development.

This biodiversity survey was conducted by Fauna & Flora in collaboration with Cambodia's Ministry of Environment and experts in their various fields. It targeted bats, cave invertebrates, herpetofauna (amphibians and lizards) and snails and included a general camera-trap survey aimed at mammals and terrestrial bird species. The survey was conducted with financial support from the EU-funded project "Biodiversity conservation to mitigate the risks of emerging infectious diseases ("BCOMING").

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For media only:

Please use the link [here](#) to download the photos

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