

NOTES

Siamese Crocodile (*Crocodylus siamensis* Schneider, 1801) in Khao Ang Ru Nai Wildlife Sanctuary, Chachoengsao Province, Thailand

The Siamese Crocodile (*Crocodylus siamensis* Schneider 1801), which occurs in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Java, Borneo and Burma, is one of rarest wild animals in the world (BAIN & HUMPHREY, 1980; TISTR, 1991). This is a result of over-hunting for crocodile skins and because of humans encroaching on its habitat. There are approximately 300 of these crocodiles remaining in the wild in the world. The number of crocodiles has decreased rapidly in Thailand to a critical level. The 1986 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals has classified the Siamese Crocodile as "Endangered", meaning that the species will become extinct soon if protective measures are not taken. Even though crocodile farms are breeding many crocodiles in captivity, the captive Siamese Crocodile is losing its genetic characteristics, because of crossbreeding with the Estuarine Crocodile (*C. porosus*) and through inbreeding.

Two other species of crocodiles also occur in Thailand: the Estuarine Crocodile (*C. porosus* Schneider, 1801) and the False Gharial (*Tomistoma schlegelii* S. Muller, 1838). These two species are also considered to be endangered by IUCN. The population sizes of all three species in Thailand were estimated at around 100 animals many years ago (YANGPRAPAKORN ET AL., 1971b).

This progress report covers the results of a survey of crocodiles in the following conservation areas: Phu Khieo Wildlife Sanctuary, Chaiyaphum Province; Yot Dom Wildlife Sanctuary, Ubon Ratchathani Province, Khao Ang Ru Nai Wildlife Sanctuary, Chachoengsao Province, Pang Sida National Park, Prachinburi Province and Kaeng Krachan National Park, Petchaburi Province. We have little information on Siamese Crocodiles in nature because no one has ever researched and studied the species in the wild.

In February, 1993, as Chachoengsao Wildlife Research Officer, I began to survey the crocodile population in Khao Ang Ru Nai Wildlife Sanctuary. The first tracks of Siamese Crocodile were found on February 14, in the region of the creek Khlong Takrao. The tracks were followed until a Siamese Crocodile was encountered and photographed on February 20 (Fig. 1). The body length was 300–350 cm. It was the first time that Siamese Crocodile had been observed in the wild in Khao Ang Ru Nai Wildlife Sanctuary.

Additional surveys in Khao Ang Ru Nai Wildlife Sanctuary revealed a second set of footprints in a tributary of Khlong Si Yud about 35 km from the first set. The Khlong Si Yud and Khlong Takrao are tributaries of the Bang Pakong River. The Siamese Crocodile population in Khao Ang Ru Nai Wildlife Sanctuary is probably very small.

Khao Ang Ru Nai Wildlife Sanctuary area is 1030 km² and includes areas in five provinces: Chachoengsao, Rayong, Chantaburi, Prachinburi and Chonburi. This area is the largest lowland forest in Thailand.

This is the most definite evidence for the existence of the Siamese Crocodile in the wild in Thailand. There are reasonably reliable reports of the species surviving in four

other protected areas. Most recently in July 1993, I found the tracks and basking area of a crocodile in Phu Khieo Wildlife Sanctuary, Chaiyaphum Province. In April of 1993 a crocodile was spotted in a stream from a plane in Pang Sida National Park, Prachinburi Province. A carcass of a crocodile was found by Dr. Panthep Ratanakorn (pers. comm.) recently in Yot Dom Wildlife Sanctuary, Ubon Ratchathani Province. Finally, I have seen one in the Petchaburi River in Kaeng Krachan National Park, Petchaburi Province, where Mr. Jarujin Nabhitabhata (pers. comm.) also attests that the species still occurs.

REFERENCES

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Figure 1. *Crocodylus siamensis* (3.0–3.5 m) in Khao Ang Ru Nai Wildlife Sanctuary, Khlong Takrao, in Feb. 1993.

