PRODUCTION REPORT
Southern Cardamom Mountains and Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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Three Degrees: Jeni Krenicki Barcelos and Jen Marlow
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1/24 to 2/2/11

MONDAY, JAN. 24th
Left Seattle at 1pm. Arrived in Phnom Penh at about midnight.

TUESDAY, JAN. 25th
Arrived Phenom Pehn at 11pm. Cleared Customs and Immigration. Met representatives from Wildlife Alliance. Drove to Cardamom Hotel. Unpacked, checked and prepped gear.

WEDNESDAY, JAN 26th
Left for Koh Kong Province and the Village of Chi Phat. Drove by van approximately four hours southwest to the Andoug Teuk Bridge at the Prek Piphot River where, at around 11am, we met Suwanna Gauntlett, CEO of Wildlife Alliance, and members of her team and government agency partners. Once the boat ride commenced, so did our filming. After approximately two hours by boat we arrived in Chi Phat and walked to the Community Based Ecotourism (CBET) Center, where we had lunch and planned logistics with Wildlife Alliance and our crew.

Toward the end of the day, we interviewed His Excellency Vann Sophann, MSc., Head of Forestry Administration, Coastal Protectorate. He spoke of the eco-tourism industry in the region, the relationship between NGOs and the government, and the proposed titanium mine.

Before the light was gone, we managed to get a short interview with two young village prawn fisherman, who also demonstrated their nighttime spear fishing technique for our camera.
THURSDAY, JAN 27th
Woke up well before sunrise and met our boat captain and ecotour guide for a two-hour boat ride downriver on motorized pangas, then transferred to quieter rowboats for another hour or so in hopes of encountering early-morning wildlife. At sun up, we were deep down river encountering a few monkeys on shore. We made our way to an overnight camp that WA guides use for tourists, then hiked about a mile into the jungle with our guide who pointed out elephant dung, indicating fairly recent activity on the trail. We were “hailed” by the cacophony of wild gibbons. With the help of our guide Jyung Khan, we managed to get some outstanding images of a male gibbon calling out for female.

We got back to Chi Phat around 2pm. We then left the village on the backs of mopeds and dirt bikes, protected by armed government patrols, for a 1-1/2-hour trek through the jungle to the proposed mining site. We got great footage of the Three Degrees team meeting and discussing the site, including examining a number of meter-and-a-half deep test holes dug by United Khmer, presumably indicating the presence of billions of dollars worth of exploitable titanium. We also shot footage of the tropical hardwood forest, described previously by United Khmer as primarily bamboo forest. We did a short interview with Wildlife Alliance’s Eduard Lefter about the mine, the site and his job in protecting the Southern Cardamoms. Got back to Chi Phat by nightfall.

FRIDAY, JAN. 28th
Aerials! The helicopter arrived in Chi Phat from Phnom Penh at 7am. After orientation and planning, we boarded and began rolling at 8am. Flew for 1-1/2 hours all over the Cardamom Mountain Range, shooting both XDCam and EX1 almost the entire time. The perspective from above was enlightening. Saw lush forest and beautiful rivers in the protected area; beyond that, clearcuts, burning fires in the fields, smoke, construction vehicles and other damage. We also did several short discussions between Jeni and Suwanna aboard the helicopter.

Landed at Wildlife Alliance’s Forestry Nursery. Shot interview with the director and B-Roll shots of the forestry workers and operation. Set up and shot an extensive interview with Suwanna Gauntlett on the banks of one of the tributaries of the Prek Piphut.
Got back on boat and shot B-Roll of a typical Wildlife Alliance patrol. Continued downriver to a site called “Elephant Rock,” where between 1975–79 the Khmer Rouge operated a forced labor camp, torturing, starving and ultimately murdering about 800 villagers from Chi Phat. Interviewed Jyung Khan, a survivor of the killing fields, who shared his memories of that tragedy, his life as a wildlife poacher after liberation and then, with the help of the government and NGOs, how he turned his life around, getting training and becoming an eco-guide.

SATURDAY, JAN 29th
Met in Chi Phat and shot B-Roll shots of the village and the people. Met a woman who operates a Guest House for eco-tourists and shot an interview with her. Traveled by boat to visit and interview a 65-year-old villager who signed a petition against the mine and is a survivor, along with his wife, of the Khmer Rouge. He lost use of the left foot when he was shot fighting alongside the Vietcong after they invaded Cambodia and removed the Khmer Rouge.

Left Chi Phat by car and shot some footage of a sugar cane harvest. Traveled to Sovanna Baitong, an agricultural community of some 167 families operated by Wildlife Alliance and the government. The project provides villagers who had previously had to rely on wildlife poaching and slash-and-burn agriculture a place where they receive land tenure, become part of a community-wide irrigation project, and learn sustainable farming techniques in an agricultural cooperative. Families are also provided a place to market their products, loans when needed, and health care and education. Shot three interviews with farmers, including discussions of local climate change. Shot sugarcane workers in the fields on the way to Phnom Penh. Arrived in Phnom Penh by nightfall.

SUNDAY, JAN 30th
No major shooting scheduled this day, so we spent a few hours at the infamous SR-21, or Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, the former middle school used by the Khmer Rouge to torture and murder about 14,000 Cambodians.
MONDAY, JAN 31st
Spent the majority of the day at the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre, where we met and interviewed its Director, Nick Marx. Got wonderful shots of keystone species of the Southern Cardamoms, including Asian elephants and critically endangered Indochinese tigers, Siamese crocodiles, etc. Later in the day, we contacted a reporter from the Phnom Penh Post, David Boyle, who’s covered the United Khmer mining story extensively. We convinced David to meet us on Tuesday for a short interview.

TUESDAY, FEB 1st
The Three Degrees team met with Nina You, a remarkable Cambodian–American woman who is trying to re-invigorate the silk trade in Cambodia, which has been severely impacted by climate change. After their meeting, we shot an interview with her. Later we went to the Documentation Center where we met the co-director. Discussed obtaining some original footage of the Cambodian wartime struggle for our story from their archives. Jen and Jeni also visited the Phnom Penh office of Oxfam.

Later, we met with Phnom Penh Post reporter David Boyle and introduced him to our team. Went to the address of the United Khmer Group to conduct an interview with David. Attracted the attention of UKG employees and got a few shots while we attempted with the help of our translator to arrange a brief interview with Chea Chet, the CEO of the company – Chet declined our invitation the day before, referring us to the Prime Minister. While we conducted our interview with David, a representative from UKG arrived came across the street and disrupted the discussion, and then refused to make any official comment. He then demanded that we turn over the video we shot there. After a brief (and abusive) phone conversation, presumably with Chet, we left the area. After making backup copies of our critical footage, we headed to the airport and left Cambodia on a late flight without incident.

We had a 12-hour layover in Seoul, so the team boarded a train, headed into the city and had lunch.

WEDNESDAY, FEB 2
Arrived back in Seattle at 11am.
Summary: In about five full days of shooting on location, we were able to collect approximately 30 hours of broadcast Sony 700 XDCam and Canon 5D high-definition footage. We were able to compile extensive interviews with conservationists, government officials, scientists and villagers living and working in Chi Phat and Sovanna Baitong, covering a wide range of subject matter – the proposed mining project, first-hand accounts of the impacts of climate change, the burgeoning eco-tourism industry, and powerful oral histories on the horrors of the Khmer Rouge on these small communities.

Our biodiversity shoot also went extremely well. We were able to capture rare images of pileated gibbons, long-tailed macaques, and other resident wildlife in the Southern Cardamoms. Our day at the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center also gave us extraordinary access to highly endangered species like the Indochinese tiger and Siamese crocodile (some of the last in the world), and of course the iconic creature of the region, the Asian elephant.

Our visit was at the very height of the dry season in the Cardamoms, and as such we were unable to see and document the famed cloud forests, rushing rivers and multitude of waterfalls, which are spectacular in the rainy season. Moreover, wildlife are much more accessible during this time of year.

Our relatively short time in Cambodia also didn’t allow us to connect with Conservation International and other NGOs doing critical work in the region, or to visit the last few indigenous villages in the country, including one that is also home to perhaps the last refuge of the Siamese crocodile.

Our hope is to return for a pickup shoot sometime during the upcoming rainy season, to complete our biodiversity shoot and compile this additional content.

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