

Laotians: Wake up!

Laos is a beautiful country. But it's neglecting its natural heritage. Tigers are on the brink of extinction in Laos. Will Lao let this happen?

VIENTIANE, LAO, August 12, 2013 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Laos is a beautiful country. But they've got work to do. Buddhism is rooted in interdependent human relationships. People used to live in smaller communities and were in closer contact with each other and nature. For one of the key values of Buddhism is 'respect for all live'! Due to globalization and economical progress cities have grown even larger. People have become less involved with each other and predominantly due to urbanization have lost contact most contact with nature itself.

The Indo-Chinese tiger used to live in great numbers in Lao, probably thousands. But nowadays only 20-30 tigers are roaming the wild.

Laos still has primary jungle left, although it already has lost about 50%. This has a deep impact on wildlife populations including the tiger. The growth of the populations led to logging of forests and to development of rice fields. Most Laotians live in rural areas (2/3) and actually are small farmers. They rely on wildlife, for food and economically as well.

As you already know from my blogs (see 'hunters-or-poachers' and 'pessimistic-about-amur-tiger') of my Russian part of TigerTrail that people living in rural areas need food and because they don't have work they need to hunt. Laos faces this challenge as well. Next to this they also have to deal with international wildlife trade. The people hunt the prey tigers (or other predators) rely on for their survival. And when their prey disappears the survival arrives at a critical point. If the jungle fails to provide food, the tiger needs to go to rural areas to hunt for livestock. They enter villages and people kill them of to preserve their own food as well as out of fear.

But who is to blame for this? The tiger? The people that live there? The government? The NGOs? The people in the cities? Or is it easier to ignore the reasons and go on with conserving like the way they used to do?

The way I see it is that people should learn from the past and do something with it. And if people don't think it's important, than the government has an obligation to act. Awareness always starts with a confrontation and you might ask the question: are people in Laos confronted enough?

It could be simple. The price one gets for a tiger on the black market will tempt people into poaching since the poor economic situations in most tiger areas will force people to hunt and to trade. And the lack of habitat keeps on causing to human-tiger conflicts. If you don't take away these causes, the tiger (and other predators as well) will end up dead eventually.

The only solution is to take away the demand by making people aware. And the only solution for people to stop hunting is to secure the areas where they hunt (control, sufficient legislation and law enforcement) and to improve economic situations, with nature as the driving force, not as an source that can be used until it's gone. So this is making governments and businesses aware. And the only solution for losing habitats is to secure the areas, precisely those primary jungles that Laos still has.

There is no time to lose. Not only the NGOs and some government officials and some people that cared and stepped up should act.

EVERYONE, including the Laotians, has enough common sense which leads them to the moral obligation to save not only their but our natural heritage from getting extinct.

It's high time to wake up.

Chris Slappendel

Currently in Laos as part of his TigerTrail, a campaign to raise awareness about tigers. About situations and solutions.

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