

July 2026 — Project Update

Marine Conservation in Cambodia

Field Partner: Marine Conservation Cambodia

I wanted to give you a quick mid-year update and express our thanks for your support for this project.

As a reminder, to safeguard seagrass meadows and nearshore habitats from illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities, MCC designed and deploys what are now called “Fishery Productivity Structures” (FPS). These inexpensive structures, assembled underwater using concrete blocks and rope, entangle nets of illegal bottom trawlers in the shallow waters of Cambodia. They also act like coral reefs in supporting the rapid recruitment marine life.

How do we know the Fishery Productivity Structures are working? Well, earlier this year, MCC conducted underwater inspections of the structures and observed clear signs that trawling nets had crashed into them. A sure tactic to dissuade future trawling in the marine management area. In addition to deterring bottom trawling, the structures ensnared abandoned fishing gear. MCC staff removed these ghost nets, thereby making Cambodia’s shallow seas a little more fish friendly.

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU) incidents remain a persistent issue. The MCC staff are regularly patrolling around Kep and Kampot provinces. In the first six months of 2026, MCC conducted 148 surveillance missions within the Kep Marine Fisheries Management Area (MFMA), totaling 1,082.75 hours of monitoring effort. They documented 145 IUU fishing incidents, averaging **one illegal vessel encounter every 7 hours and 28 minutes** of monitoring!





Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins were recorded in Koh Kong for the first time by the marine mammal team. Monitoring was carried out by the MCC research team together with trained community members, volunteers, and Community Fisheries representatives, demonstrating the continued integration of scientific research and community-based conservation.



CFI members during training on marine mammal surveys in Chroy Svay

Irrawaddy dolphins were recorded consistently in Kampot throughout the reporting period, with the highest encounter rates observed in February. Preliminary surveys also documented dugong presence in Kampot, contributing valuable information on one of Cambodia's most threatened marine mammals. In addition to recording species presence, surveys documented behaviors including travelling, diving, surface feeding, socializing, and resting, providing further insight into habitat use across different coastal areas.

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions, suggestions, or just want to chat about this project.

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